

AINSLEE'S

THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS

DEC. ~ 1923

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I Tell You This Free Book Will Show You The Way to Amazing Salary Increases



READ !

99,000 First Year
Ellis Summer Cook, 20 E. Jackson Blvd., Chicago, left a \$25 a week job and last year made \$9,000.

\$100 Month to \$1000 a Year
In 3 months

H. D. Miller, another Chicago boy, was making \$100 a month as bookkeeper in July, 1922. In September, 3 months later, he was making \$1000 a week as a salesman.

\$150 to \$500 a Month
W. P. Cleeny, of Kansas City, Mo., was making \$150 a month cleaning up into a selling job at \$500 a month. He is making \$850 a month now.

\$150 to \$500 a Year
M. V. Stover, of Albany, Ky., was making \$25 a week. He took up this training and now makes five times that much.

Small Pay to Big Earnings
J. H. Clegg, of Atlanta, Ga., exchanges his \$75 a month job for one which pays him \$500 a month. Now Sales Manager at \$10,000 a Year

O. H. Malfroot, of Boston, Mass., stepped up to a \$10,000 position as a SALES MANAGER—so thorough is this training. All these successes are due to this new, fascinating and rapid way to master certain Invincible secrets of selling.



By J. E. GREENSLADE

First let me ask you two questions. One: Do you consider that you are as intelligent as the average mail-clerk, farmhand, office clerk, mechanic, or bookkeeper?

Second: If you suddenly found yourself with all the money you wanted to spend, wearing the best clothes, living in a fine neighborhood, driving a good car and belonging to the best clubs—but having to make good in a job that paid \$10,000 a year, would it scare you? There are men to whom \$10,000 a year is so much that the idea of earning it themselves never occurs to them. They will always be in routine jobs at low pay. Their dreams will never come true. But yours will if you will absorb what I am going to tell you.

Now, in one quick step you can enter the field where opportunities in your favor are ten times greater than in the selling field. You know that Salesmen top the list of entrepreneurs—that the salesman is his own boss—that his work is fascinating, interesting and highly profitable! But the thing you doubt is your own ability. All right, but you can become a first-class, money-making salesman in an amazingly easy way.

Proof That Salesmen Are Made —Not "Born"

The story of six men who once thought salesmen were "born," who did not believe they were "cut out for selling," is on this page.

Thousands of men like these six men who formerly thought salesmen were "born" are now enjoying magnificent earnings in the selling field. They were bookkeepers, mechanics, farmers, clerks—evens doctors, lawyers and ministers—but in a few months after writing to the National Salesmen's Training Association they were out in the field selling—and making more money than they had ever hoped to make.

Sounds remarkable, doesn't it? Yet there is nothing remarkable about it. Salesmanship is governed by rules and laws. There is a certain way of saying and doing things, a certain way of approaching a prospect to get his undivided attention, certain ways to overcome objections, batter down prejudice, and overcome competition.

I only ask that you risk two cents on the strength of my word that the contents of this amazing book will show you the way to a prosperity that you never dreamed possible, in a fascinating field that you never thought of entering. This book is now free. Read my offer.

Just as you learned the alphabet, so you can learn salesmanship. And through the NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION METHOD—an exclusive feature of the N. S. T. A. System of Salesmanship Training—you gain actual experience while studying.

Years of Selling Experience in a Few Weeks

The N. S. T. A. System of Salesmanship Training and Employment Service will enable you to quickly step into the ranks of successful salesmen—will give you a big advantage over those who lack this training. It will enable you to jump from small pay to a real man's income.

Remarkable Book, "Modern Salesmanship" Sent Free

With my compliments I want to send you a most remarkable book, "Modern Salesmanship."

It will show you how you can easily become a Master Salesman—a big money-maker—how the N. S. T. A. System of Salesmanship Training will give you years of selling experience in a few weeks; how our FREE employment service will help select and secure a good selling position when you are qualified and ready. And it will give you success stories of former routine workers who are now earning amazing salaries as salesmen. Mail the coupon today. It may be the turning point in your life.

**National Salesmen's Training Association
Dept. 4-W Chicago, Ill.**

**National Salesmen's Training Association
Dept. 4-W Chicago, Ill.**

I simply want to see the facts. Send me free your book, "Modern Salesmanship," and Proof that I can become a Master Salesman.

Name.....

Address.....

City..... State.....

Age..... Occupation.....

EMPLOYERS

We invite you to write to the Employment Dept. of the N. S. T. A. We can put you in touch with just the men you need. No charge for this service to you or our members. Employers are invited to personally interview, request details about the N. S. T. A. Group Plan of instruction for entire sales force. Synopsis and charts sent without obligation.

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements

December
1923

AINSLEE'S

THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS

Vol. LII
No. 4

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Address all communications to the Street & Smith Corporation



If your rheumatism comes on again this year—

How can a medicine that is applied on the outside of the skin reach a pain deep down in the joints and muscles? This treatment acts by stimulating the brain to send new blood to the affected area

DON'T suffer unnecessary pain. Get relief at once. It may be splendidly courageous to just "grin and bear it"—but it is a frightful waste of the very vital resources you need to help you get rid of the cause of the pain.

Your doctor will tell you that pain should always be relieved—just as quickly and as completely as possible.

And this relief is easily at hand. However deep-seated, however hard to reach the pain may seem to you, it can be stopped—quickly and permanently.

Nearly fifty years ago a remedy for muscular pain was given to the world that has brought relief to so many sufferers that today you will find it in one home out of every three.

This remedy is Sloan's Liniment—probably the foremost household remedy in America, used all over the world and recommended by doctors everywhere.

No matter where the pain is, no matter how deep down in joints and muscles, *it can be reached* if the natural curative powers *inside* the body are only aroused.

When you use Sloan's, it stimulates the

nerves on the skin. They arouse the brain, which in turn causes the blood vessels to expand throughout the painful area, *under* the place where the liniment has been applied. Rich new blood rushes in.

This new blood coming, freshly purified, from heart and lungs, with all its marvelous germ-destroying, upbuilding powers brings to sick, pain-ridden tissues just what they need to heal them.

This is the scientifically correct way to relieve pain. It doesn't just deaden the nerves. It gives your own natural bodily defenses the aid they need to drive out the cause of pain.

Don't wait until you are in actual need. Get a bottle of Sloan's this very day, and have it on hand—35c at all druggists. Just apply it—no rubbing is necessary. It will not stain. Immediately you will feel a gentle warmth—then a pleasant tingling of the skin—then, almost magically, relief from pain. There is no burning, no blistering, only quick, lasting relief.

SLOAN'S Liniment — Kills pain

WHY?

We receive many letters of helpful suggestion, coupled with applications for the privilege of making a better job of our advertising department.

Perhaps you too wonder why our magazines carry so little advertising. Let us take you into our confidence.

The real truth is that advertisers, almost as a whole, have hesitated about using fiction magazines because of a conviction that the purchasers of such magazines buy them for the stories they contain, and do not read the advertisements.

You, as readers, and we, as publishers, know this to be wrong. We know you read the advertisements in our magazines, and that you can help us prove it to the advertisers.

Therefore, if you will tell us why you think one advertisement in this magazine is better than another and if your letter proves to be the best one received on the subject during the month, we will send you \$15.00. We will pay \$5.00 to the reader who sends in the second best criticism, \$3.00 to the reader who sends in the third best, and \$2.00 to the reader who sends in the fourth.

This contest costs you nothing to enter. There are no conditions or rules to be complied with. Simply read over the advertisements in this magazine, being careful to state which magazine and number you are criticizing, and tell us which advertisement you like best, and

WHY?

Contest for this issue closes January 1st, 1924

ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT

STREET & SMITH CORPORATION
79 Seventh Avenue New York City

The individualized Corona

*a wonderful idea
in Christmas gifts*

Use this list to select your Christmas Corona

If the vocation of the person to whom you will give Corona is not listed here, mail the coupon below.

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Architects	XC-Special
Authors	Standard
Bankers	Portable No. 2
Business Men	"
Chemists	XC-Chemical
Children	No. 10
Doctors	Medical No. 10
Druggists	"
Engineers	XC-Engineering
Farmers	"
Housewives	"
Insurance Men	"
Lawyers	NC-Polyglot or any one of 3 languages
Linguists	"
Ministers	NC-D
Playwrights	"
Realtors	"
Retailers	XC-A
Salemen	XC-A or Special
Secretaries	No. 20
Scenario Writers	"
Stenographers	XC-A
Students	No. 20 or Special
Teachers	No. 20 or NC-Polyglot

Note: All "XC" keyboards have 99 characters, with "dead keys" where required.

CLIP HERE:

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Please tell me where I can see Corona. I am interested in purchasing one for the following kind of work:

.....
Name
Address

THE gift of a Corona will mean more this year than ever before. You can now select a Corona Keyboard which exactly suits the vocation of the one who is to receive it.

There is scarcely anyone who does not need a Corona nowadays. In business, in school, in the home, Corona is fast replacing the pen.

It's a satisfying gift to give, or to receive—wonderfully durable, light, compact, yet big in the work it does.

Corona has a 10-inch carriage, a two-color, automatically reversing ribbon, back spacer, margin release, platen release, paper release, self-spacing carriage return—everything you would expect in a heavy machine—yet it costs only half as much.

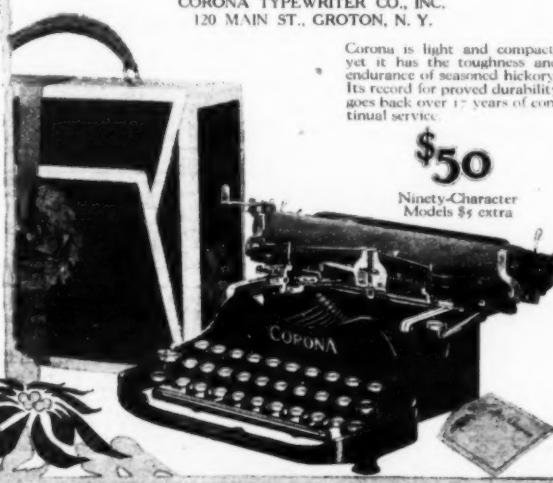
Place your order today for one or more Coronas for Christmas. Your dealer will deliver the machines, specially packed in beautiful Christmas cartons, on whatever date you specify. If your phone book doesn't list "Corona," mail the coupon for the address of the nearest store.

CORONA TYPEWRITER CO., INC.
120 MAIN ST., GROTON, N. Y.

Corona is light and compact,
yet it has the toughness and
endurance of selected hickory.
Its record for proved durability
goes back over 17 years of con-
tinual service.

\$50

Ninety-Character
Models \$5 extra



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SALESMEN—Make \$75.00 a week selling all-wood made-to-measure suits and overcoats at amazing low prices. Ladies' coats, too. Write for full outfit furnished. All colors—grades, including silk and beldera. Mac-O-Che Mills Company, 1931 15012, Cincinnati, Ohio.

GOVERNMENT wants Radium Metal Clerks, \$133 month. List positions open—free. Write to-day. Franklin Institute, Dept. D-2, Rochester, N. Y.

A WHIZ-BANG game or while the proposition—write to us now. Box 231, Covington, Kentucky.

MAKE \$120 WEEKLY IN SPARE TIME—Sell what the public wants—long distance radio receiving sets. Two sales weekly pays \$120 profit. No big investment, no commission. Sharp radio equipment made \$255 in one month. Representatives wanted at other. This plan is sweeping the country—write today giving name of your county. 2029 Washington Blvd., Chicago.

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WE MANUFACTURE AN ARTICLE of wearing apparel that can be sold in most every home by men or women agents. Enormous demand and no competition. No other article is comparable direct to consumer. Prices 50% less than retail stores. Our agents make big profits and get them in advance. We deliver and collect all expenses necessary. Full instructions accompany handsome selling outfit. Free. We can use part or full time workers. If you want a big money-making proposition—easy sales and no competition—write at once. R. Wright & Co., Congress, Throop & Harrison, Sts., Dept. B-33, Chicago.

EARN UP to \$400 monthly, living expenses paid. We place men and women; train. In spare time, at home for hotel executive positions. For free. Free Booklet. Stand. Business Training Inst., 211 Carlton Court, Buffalo, N. Y.

Agents and Help Wanted—Continued

TAILORING SALESMEN, \$50.00 extra profit guaranteed. Self Wright's men's suits and overcoats made-to-measure, \$25.50—\$29.50—\$29.50 retail—Boys' Suits \$10.00—\$12.00—\$12.00 retail. Men's suits you like best. Women's suits, too. You double your sales profits. You get your profit in advance we deliver all men's and boys' clothes in handsome case—Free. Write for full particulars. Wright & Co., Congress, Throop & Harrison Sts., Dept. C-33, Chicago.

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TAILORING SALESMEN. Make \$10.00 profit on sale. Get our outfit made-to-measure suits, \$10.00 to \$30.00. Boys' suits, \$5.00 to \$8.00. Fine goods. Cotton made. You can sell big profits. Make all the profit you want. Underself all competition. Lower prices than any other line you get big profits in advance. We deliver all men's and boys' clothes in handsome case—Free. Write for full particulars. Fred Kaufmann, The American Tailor, 1300 W. Harrison St., Chicago, Dept. E-33.

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WRITE NEWS, ITEMS AND BRITISH STORIES for my in spare time. Copying Book and plan free. Press Reporting Studio (466), 103, Louis, Mo.

WRITE PHOTOPLAYS: \$25—\$300 per issue for amateur idea. Experience necessary; completed outline free. Producer League, 1308, St. Louis, Mo.

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EARN \$20 weekly spare time, at home, advertising, mailing music, circulars. Send me, for music, information. American Music Co., 1638 Broadway, Dept. J-15, N. Y.

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EARN \$10 to \$250 monthly, expenses paid as Railway Traffic Inspector. Position guaranteed after completion of 3 months' home study course or money refunded. Excellent opportunities. Write for Free Booklet, C-24. Stand. Business Training Inst., Buffalo, N. Y.

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AME. YOU BASHFUL? Self-conscious? Send dime for booklet how to overcome these troubles. Veritas, 1100 Broadway, New York, Dept. 22.

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JOURNALISM—PHOTOPLAYS—SHORT STORIES. Plot Chart and Copyright Book Free to those wishing to enter above professions or dilettante managers. Write for details. (Our Service offered is given to Professional Authors and Editors of highest standing.) Harvard Company, 337, New Francisco.

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WRITE THE WORDS FOR A SONG. We compose music. Our Chief of Staff wrote many big song-hits. Submit your song-poem to us at once. New York City Corp., 102 F. Roman Blvd., New York City.

(Continued on third page following)

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8. Spare time work—Special earn-while-you-learn lessons.
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10. Cash Refund Guarantee Bond.

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IT'S a shame for you to earn less than \$100.00 a week when trained Electrical Experts are in such great demand. You ought to get more. You can get more.

Cooke Trained "Electrical Experts" earn \$70 to \$200 a week. Fit yourself for one of these big paying positions. Get into a line of work where there are hundreds and hundreds of opportunities for advancement and a big success.

What's YOUR Future? Today even the ordinary Electrician—the "screw driver" kind—is making money—big money. But it's the trained man—the man who knows the whys and wherefores of Electricity—the "Electrical Expert"—who is picked out to "boss" ordinary Electricians—to boss the Big Jobs—the jobs that pay up to \$10,000 a year.

Age or Lack of Experience No Drawback

You don't have to be a College Man; you don't have to be a High School graduate. My Course in Electricity is the most simple, thorough and successful in existence, and offers every man, regardless of age, education or previous experience, the chance to become, in a very short time, an "Electrical Expert," able to make from \$70 to \$200 a week.

I Give You a Real Training As Chief Engineer of the Chicago Engineering Works I know exactly what kind of training a man needs to get the best positions at the highest salaries. Hundreds of students are now earning \$3,500 to \$10,000. Many are now successful ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS.

Your Satisfaction Guaranteed So sure am I that you can learn Electricity—so sure am I that after studying with me, you, too, can get into the "big money" class in electrical work, that I'll guarantee to give bond to return every single penny paid to me in tuition if, when you have finished my course, you are not satisfied it was the best investment you ever made.

FREE-Electrical Working Outfit-FREE

I give each student a Spendid Outfit of Electrical Tools, Materials and Manufacturing Instruction absolutely FREE. I also supply them with Drawing Outfit, examination paper, and many other things that other schools don't furnish. You do PRACTICAL work AT HOME. You start right in after the first few lessons to work at your profession as a practical electrical engineer.

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Dept. 79, 2159 Lawrence Ave., Chicago, Illinois

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Chief
Engineer
Chicago
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Works
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Name.....
Address.....
Occupation.....
Age.....

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Belated Charity

New York dailies each recently published an editorial, using for a subject the anonymous gift of \$100,000 to promote the writing of better juvenile fiction.

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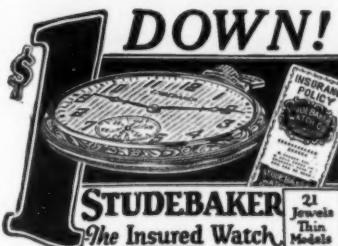
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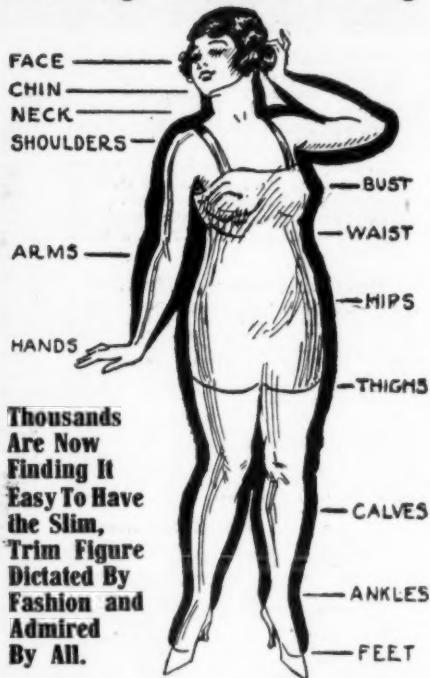
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**H. C. HAIST, Whinton Laboratories,
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**American Technical Society
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AINSLEE'S

VOL. LII.

DECEMBER, 1923.

No. 4.



Romany's Rest

By Winston Bouvé

Author of "Midas' Daughter,"
"The Plunderers," etc.



CHAPTER I.

PARIS is Paris all the year round. But Paris in spring when the horse-chestnut trees are blooming, is more than ever the Mecca of most. Dosha Varesco, the untraveled, found it the city of her love. The sunny boulevards, the same avenues at dusk, sentinelled by aged trees whose bloom scents the air, and makes Paris a sweet-breathed courtesan; the shops, the twisting cobbled streets of surprise; the sidewalk cafés where she and her husband spent hours watching the world and the half world go by; the terraced restaurants where, occasionally, they as well as royalty dined without fanfare—all these would have enchanted her even if they had not been seen through the rose mist of her love's fulfillment.

It was a magical setting for these flowering first days of her amazing marriage. In it, Dorothea Armitage, runaway American bride of the Roumanian gypsy violinist who even now was emerging from obscurity into the triumph of a Paris débüt, was being transformed from a rebellious girl, guarded from every sophistication, every perilous contact, by a witchlike great-aunt, into one of the lovely worldlings who are

part of the composite town of delight. The transformation was effected by the wand of her wit, her quick grasp of whatever went on about her. But it was not complete.

For beneath the poise of her perfectly proportioned body, the cool arrogance of her sapphire gaze, Dosha—she had adopted this odd, musical abbreviation of her name in babyhood—was only a happy bride. With Alec, the beautiful, beside her in a musty fiacre, little wonder that each boulevard led to heaven. With his foot pressing her slipper under the table of some out-of-the-way restaurant whose presence, behind its brick wall, the uninitiate would never guess, his glorious eyes that, unclouded, were as darkly lustrous as brook water, holding hers, the vin ordinaire was nectar, the food ambrosial. And yet—

One flaw in her happiness was her loneliness. For many were the hours she spent alone. She and her husband had come to Paris upon his receipt of a cable from his concert manager, who had succeeded at last in booking him for a long-postponed opening in a famous house. This, the pinnacle of his roving years, meant acknowledgment of his genuine talent. There would be no more

underpaid tours; no more playing at entertainments given by rich Americans who showed him the preposterous condescension they reserved for artists who put out their talents to hire! How he hated and resented those Americans, among whom he had lived in shabby, roving fashion for so long. But wait—let him achieve renown here, return to America as Varesco, the great, and he would reap payment for those lean, obscure years.

The weeks preceding his débüt were crowded with rehearsals, with interviews of importance, with all the detail of an artist's life. Alec was obliged to leave his wife of three weeks at the hotel much of the time, and that meant loneliness. For she found herself withdrawing from the overtures of the other inhabitants of the shabby place.

It was not, Alec regretfully informed her on the night of his opening, a particularly desirable hostelry, but until their income was larger they could afford nothing more luxurious.

His bride was of the penniless rich. Brought up in luxury by wealthy old Madam Armitage, accustomed to the heedless purchase of all the things she fancied, she now found herself possessed of the trifling sum that remained of her last quarter's allowance, and nothing besides.

Varesco thought of all this with a sigh, finished his observations with a shrug of his adequate, graceful shoulders, half expecting Dosha to reach for her bag, in which lay a check on a New York bank.

"It grieves me to hide you away in this ugly hole, my beautiful," he told her impatiently. "You should be flaunted before the eyes of envious men and women whom no finery can make lovely when you are near them! Don't frown, beloved. Can I help wanting to parade you as mine?"

Dosha, dressing for dinner, secured the magnificent coil of her black hair

with a silver comb, smiled, relenting, at her reflection. His naïveté outweighed his sometimes atrocious taste.

"Besides," he continued, watching her with the idle, yet intense, pleasure that he took in all beauty, "I very much dislike the discomfort of a place like this. Makeshifts are always detestable."

She came to him, as he intended that she should, sat upon the arm of his chair.

"You're an inconsistent creature, Alec. Sometimes I think you could never have lived a vagabond life. You're like a cat about comfort, luxury of any sort. You respond so absolutely to all the artificial things that seep the senses. Sybarite that you are!"

He permitted himself to fall under the spell of her nearness, as he always did, with a certain deliberateness, drew her down to him.

"And other times, what do you think of me?"

She held him off, flushed, laughing, yet with a curious, baffling sense of hostility.

"That you're—a savage!"

"So!" He held her as if she were a struggling bird, to lose her only after a kiss which, forced upon her, antagonized her while her own lips responded to it.

"And you do not really know which I am?"

"I don't really know you!" she told him, and found it true. "I don't. I think of you as a little, sad-eyed, dark-skinned boy, traveling with a gypsy caravan, sleeping under the stars. I try to picture you later, moving among strange figures, in strange places all over the world. But your companions are shadows; and you the most unreal shadow of them all. That part of your life I can never know. Your friends, your pursuits—you've made them a legend; a story told in another tongue which I can't understand."

He sighed.

"You would have the past as well as

the present, you women. Ah, well! Dosha mine, being mine, you should understand that each hour we are together is too vital a thing to fill with legend! I am not proud of the past ten years. They have been wasted years. I have flung aside a thousand opportunities to indulge in the pastime of an hour; squandering myself in a thousand ways." His black brows knit in sullen remembrance. "The dead past is a ghost because the present is so vital. Just as you dim the very shadows of other women I have known, so does today make yesterday a ghost!"

Those other women. Singularly, she was possessed only of a vague curiosity about them.

"Were they legion?"

He grimaced.

"There speaks your cool English blood, which knows not jealousy. I think I should like you to be jealous of me, my Dosha; ready to fling yourself upon me like a fury, or knife my enchantress." He laughed. "You do not like a primitive lover, no? You prefer Varesco, rich and famous. So do I, for the moment at least. That is why—" He paused.

"Yes." She slipped into the black lace frock she had chosen with such care for this occasion, presented her lovely back to him, that he might fasten it.

"Why it is not well for us to stay here," he continued. "After to-morrow I shall no longer be obscure. I shall be Varesco! But still poor. My pockets are empty now, in fact. And it is imperative that we move to a decent hotel, be able to face those ferrets of reporters with composure. I shall have to borrow from you, my loved one."

Her lovely face flamed. Accustomed to money and the spending of it, she had taken things for granted. It would not have occurred to her to offer her husband money, to have inquired into his financial status.

"How stupid of me!" she cried remorsefully. "Alec, why didn't you tell me before! And you let me buy this expensive frock, that blue negligee, quantities of unnecessary things!"

She thrust her hand into her purse, counted through a crumpled handful of money, forced the bunched notes into his grasp.

"Take these. I have nearly a thousand dollars left in the bank."

"Your aunt—" he murmured.

"Aunt Alicia!" She laughed, her fine brows knit. "I fancy she considers herself perfectly justified in her course. Perhaps she is. At any rate, we can expect nothing from her. The only half-full Armitage coffers were left outright to her, long ago, remember. She provided for my father, for me."

"It would be wise to placate the lady," Alec suggested. But something in his bride's startled eyes kept him from pressing the point. Instead, he told her of a certain fashionable bohemian restaurant near the theater, where they were to dine.

It was late, she discovered. Time sped always when she was with Varesco. She stepped out of the brocaded mules that graced her bare, arched instep, donned webby hose, buckled slippers. These happy days made her riotously glad of the beauty which she had for so long taken for granted. Alec, passionate lover of things lovely, would never have cared for her that first mad night if she had been thin and sallow, of indeterminate feature and coloring. She watched him as he strapped his violin case, rinsed his fastidious hands. His remarkable good looks, his unusual distinction, were emphasized by his well-cut dinner clothes. Black broadcloth divides men so inevitably into two classes; shows them to be gentlemen, or in a class with liveried servants socially. But Varesco—Varesco remained himself, undisguised. And such dark beauty as his demanded its mate.

He kissed the warm ivory of her shoulder before he adjusted her wrap, held her very close.

"If it should happen, Dosha mine, that they should not like the music from my bow—if Varesco should slink off unapplauded! What then?"

She laughed confidently, her cheek against his.

"I should be waiting to take you in my arms, comfort you, make you forget what had happened."

There was only tenderness in her eyes. And with a curious little contraction of his mouth he turned away.

"You make me regret that I am impervious to most tender things," he told her. "Sometimes, Dosha, we, the happy ones, are to be pitied."

She was to remember that much later.

In a lurching, open fiacre they drove to the momentarily famous café at which they were going to celebrate this night of nights. The boulevard was strung with light, which lay on the breast of the city like a jeweled necklace. The restaurant, barely half full at this early hour, was at their gracious feet, if the inclusive and perfect gesture of the *maitre d'hôtel* meant anything. He preceded them to an excellent table, removed the cloak of madame with reverent hands. Dosha, childlike, reveled in the magnificent pleasure of being gazed upon by dozens of approving eyes. It was Varesco who knew that not his presence, reasonably well known though he was, but Dosha's beauty, was the magnet which drew attention to them. Well pleased, he told her so.

Sometimes it dismayed him to remember that, because of a moment's whim, he had bound himself to one woman in the permanent bondage of marriage. Occasionally—for they had quarreled three times—he had raged at the realization. That he, Varesco, wandering minstrel that he was, should have bartered his freedom for one woman's white

arms, one pair of violet eyes! It was unthinkable.

But now, in this setting of gold and ivory, discreetly combined, against these costly walls and their greenery, under the warm, subdued lights, the lovely girl was well worth possessing. And Varesco—not the wandering minstrel, but the fêted, the great—needed a wife who would stand out among other women as a pearl among baubles. And Dosha was unique among women. She sat there, proud head held high on a milky throat, which, ungraced by a single jewel, yet was incomparable in its bare perfection. Varesco recognized presently at a nearby table a famous English stage beauty, with spraying aigrettes in her yellow, elaborately coiffed hair, and diamonds—a royal gift, some said—on both famous arms. Her gown, cut to display a back of international repute, was more gorgeous than Dosha's black frock. But, Varesco discovered with a certain surprise of his own, she succeeded only in looking florid.

It was pleasant, this displaying of a wife like Dosha at a place of this sort. It gave him a feeling of superiority, of heady importance. Yet, as the dinner progressed, he looked back regretfully on certain other dinners in Paris. In the old days he had never dined in fashionable cafés. He and his shabby, agreeable, roysterer friends had patronized one of a dozen cheap table d'hôtes about the Quartier. They had been good days, those, lean as they were. There had been gayety and sprightly fellowship in good measure.

For no reason at all he found that he had conjured up the vision of a thin, red-haired girl who had danced like something unmortal. When she had no engagement in cheap cafés she had posed for one Paul Bruyères, for in spite of her thinness she had been exquisite.

Then, as he listened to Dosha, he realized why he had remembered that

ghost of yesterday. A woman sat at a table beyond them, half hidden by the greenery, who had rebellious red hair of the same intense and vivid hue that he remembered so well.

Merciful heaven! how that girl—was not her name Fenella?—could dance! He uttered an exclamation of surprise. Music had recommenced in a wild, barbaric strain, and the woman, whom he had only glimpsed, rose, came toward him. That lithe and exquisite body, cunningly tissued in gold, could belong to no one else. He half rose, as some one behind him said audibly: "La Gayos!"

It was she, and her eyes, pellucid, warmly golden, like a panther's, searched his face.

"Alec!" she breathed.

She caught his hands, and while Dosha, a queer fluttering in her heart, looked on, the girl kissed Varesco lightly on both cheeks.

"*La petite Fenella!*" He was joyous at the meeting.

"*C'est moi!* But now it is '*la belle Fenella.*' I dance here—once during the evening! Come to my dressing room afterward, and wait for me."

She swept past him, and a moment later lost her identity in the dance.

"An old friend," Alec explained, the color of pleasure high in his cheeks. "It is good to find one left in Paris. Of all of us, I thought myself alone. We wild birds scatter," he ended, ruminatively.

Dosha, muted strangely, watched the golden figure flash before them. The dance, and the demanded encore over, Varesco rose.

"I shall be back soon," he promised. "La Gayos will not keep me from you!" His eyes strove to reassure her.

She glanced at the watch on her wrist.

"Not I, but your manager will be anxious if you stay long," she reminded him. "It is nearly eight now."

But he was already gone.

Dosha continued her well-ordered meal in leisurely fashion, maintaining a sureness of poise which she was far from feeling in the now crowded room. But she did not admit her hurt dismay at being left alone until, some time later, she realized, on consulting her watch, that he had been gone more than twenty minutes. Though it hurt her pride to do so, she summoned the obsequious waiter, sent word to Varesco that it was time to leave. Coolly she did it, then waited, playing with her salad.

But her heart sank when, five minutes later, the man returned, unaccompanied by Alec's distinguished figure.

Apologetically he spread his pudgy hands.

"Monsieur was obliged to leave for the theater, madame. He left word for you—a thousand regrets! And begged that you would have the kindness to meet him there."

Dosha inclined her head, dismissed him. The great room reeled before her eyes. Alec had left her in this cruelly thoughtless fashion to finish her dinner alone; moreover, to pay the bill which would, she knew, be large. And but an hour before she had given him all the money she had. There were barely twenty francs in her purse, she knew. The situation was appalling. How could he have done such a thing!

Only the nervous tap of her satin-shod foot under the table betrayed the anger that was surmounting her hurt pride, her embarrassment. For Dosha could be angry. Once roused, her unleashed tempests swept most things before them. Her small, strong hands, clenched in her lap, gripped each other. Only her heritage of breed, her early training, kept her pale, lovely face a mask, her long black lashes lowered over her stormy eyes.

Yet when the attentive, rather mystified waiter drew near, she ordered

dessert and coffee with a nonchalance which surprised herself, conscious as she was of the paltry sum in her bag.

The force of her anger spent itself at last, gave place to her sound American common sense, which was now called upon to devise some means of extricating her from this dilemma. The minutes were speeding by. Already the waiter hovered within sight, to present the bill at her summoning gesture. She could, of course, see the *maître d'hôtel*, explain her predicament, she supposed. But the very thought of such a course, and its attendant publicity, revolted her. He would be sent for, would come to the table with a knowing air. People all about her would turn and look while, tremblingly, she told her story. Oh, it was horrible.

There was a desperate brightness in her unbelievably blue eyes as she glanced about the crowded, brilliant room. If there were but one person there that she knew, to whom she could turn for help!

For a moment she saw the diners through a blur of childish tears, which, forbidden, cleared away like morning mist. She would not be frightened or dismayed! Her black head lifted on the proud young column of her throat, and with dignity she nodded to the waiter. Regality cloaked her. Calmly she took the proffered bill, glanced at the total—larger than she had dreamed it could be. Then calmly she laid it aside, to be served the last of the coffee. How long, she wondered, would the tiny cupful last? Slowly she sipped at it, barely conscious that each mouthful scalded her throat.

It was then that, among the kaleidoscopic color and movement of the scene, one face became distinct to her distracted vision. A tall, fair-haired man sat alone, halfway across the room, watching her with idle interest. Something about the carriage of his head, rather than any significant detail of

feature, distinguished him among the multitude. For he was not handsome, she remembered afterward. But an aristocratic chin, a rather whimsical mouth, half hidden by his small, fair mustache, and the exceedingly bored and futile depths of his gray eyes, which looked out upon the world through partially lowered lids, made him notable. He was obviously—and the fact was very precious to her just then—an American gentleman.

He gazed at her, not at all rudely, merely speculatively. And suddenly a desperate, frail hope took form in Dosha's head. Could she—dared she—

She met his interested eyes squarely. And because she had no other recourse, she smiled as if he were an old acquaintance, beckoned to him with a careless hand.

And a moment later he stood beside her, and with a conventional word of greeting, seated himself in the chair Alec had vacated. Dosha was dumb with horror.

"Madame is more than kind," he murmured in excellent French, his clever, sophisticated mouth half amused, half contemptuous.

Dosha flung out her small hands in a gesture of childlike despair.

"Please," she murmured throatily. "I am an American—and because I recognized you as a countryman I—am calling upon you in this way. I—I am in a hideous predicament. My husband has been called away, and I haven't enough money with me to pay for our dinner. Will you lend me five hundred francs?"

Ross Allerton considered her for a moment. He flattered himself that he was a keen judge of women, and that his suspicion of this amazing and beautiful creature was not evident. Her story, old as the inevitable response of the boulevardier, gave the lie to her frank, lovely eyes, which were precisely

the hue of the delphiniums he remembered as a blue cloud in the garden of a certain North Shore country place.

For years he had traveled about the Continent with his sister, who still maintained her home in Paris, though the dissolute Frenchman she had married and lived apart from since the first disillusioning year had been dead half of a decade. He was, frankly, acquainted with most types of fortune-seeking women. And he could not, possibly would not, admit that this girl belonged to either classification. Murmuring inconsequential things, he saw terror in her eyes. This, then, was her novitiate! Incredible!

"Keep up the pretense of acquaintanceship, madame," he advised her. Then, for the waiter's benefit: "What inconceivably good luck that I should run across you like this!"

"Isn't it? And your sister—she is with you in Paris?" Dosha parried desperately.

His eyes narrowed. Did she know then who he was? Might not this be a deliberately planned move? It was with a curious sense of relief that he realized she was talking quite at random, had merely happened to hit the mark.

"She is here, after wintering on the Riviera as usual," he admitted. The desperation which her black lashes veiled incompletely told him how badly she wanted to escape the situation she had brought upon herself. It would have been easy to pick up the bill, pay it negligently, while the waiter lowered discreet, understanding eyes. Instead, he managed to knock her foolish little bag to the floor, recover it deftly before an attendant had time to reach their table, hand it to her with an explanatory word.

And Dosha, accepting it from his hand, found it open, felt the crispness of the new money which he had hastily thrust into it. The man's delicacy moved her oddly. It was an unbeliev-

ably kind act, the act of a generous gentleman!

"Thank you," she said simply.

And he felt instinctively the depths of her gratitude, which softened her blue gaze until he turned away, ashamed either of his former disbelief in her, or of his present credulity.

She scanned the bill once, handed it, with a yellow note, to the waiter, moved to sheath her ivory arms in the brocade folds of her wrap.

"I must go. My husband"—there was the slightest break in her voice—"I am Madame Varesco—is making his début at the Théâtre Elysée. I could hardly be late! And now—to whom am I indebted, please?"

Allerton concealed a smile. His lady of mystery had overplayed. Varesco, whose music he well knew, whose roving career he had, moreover, followed, had no wife. Was this countrywoman of his one of the violinist's many women acquaintances? The fellow had the reputation of being irresistible. Ah, well—

"Please forget the slight indebtedness," he begged coolly.

Dosha swept him with a contemptuous glance.

"You ask the impossible, m'sieur." She was furious with herself for making such temerity possible. Her gloved hand sought the tiny gilt pencil and tablet she always carried. "Your name and address, if you please," she demanded of him coolly, with a quiet dignity.

He shrugged. If she chose to be magnificent—

"Ross Allerton, Hôtel d'Estaiile." He watched her narrowly. His name, which was synonymous with one of the great American fortunes, just as it was famed as that of a patron of the arts, caused no ripple of surprise to cross her countenance.

"My husband will be grateful to you for your kindness," she told him

formally. "He will express his thanks in the morning with his check."

And with a slight inclination of her beautiful head she brushed past him, was gone. The little adventure, which had given him a very vital half hour, was ended. But was it? He remembered suddenly that his sister, the Comtesse de Brisac, had a box at the Elysée, where Varesco was that night performing. Her party was complete, but Nella would not mind if he joined it toward the end of the evening. Nella could always be counted upon to be amiable.

Still cold with anger Dosha meanwhile followed a braided usher through the lobby of the theater, up a carpeted staircase that led to the boxes. And yet, childlike, it thrilled her to realize that Bonnay, Alec's manager, had reserved the most advantageous box in the house for her alone. That had been, she felt, kind of the fat little Frenchman, who had, on hearing of Varesco's marriage, flung up his hands in despair, and, to her secret dismay, implored them to keep the thing hushed until after the *début*, at least.

Then she forgot all these things. For Alec, the well beloved, the beautiful, stood before her eyes on the unimportant stage. Gayly he acknowledged the tumultuous applause, the stamping of feet. She looked about her, glanced quickly down at the program. He had already played, then, had already won this thundering approval from the public. He was at the moment triumph incarnate. But she saw little more, for the brilliant house was darkened, silence had fallen on the audience. Varesco had lifted his magic bow.

CHAPTER II.

Certain people, chosen by destiny to fulfill missions of peril and passion, of brilliance and glamour, are often set apart from the drab and the commonplace by cunning devices of nature. And

in their remoteness, which is never obscure, but only distinguished, they rarely know how dramatic are the elements of their very lives until they come to the crux of things.

So it was that Dorothea Armitage had faced her approaching marriage to pleasant, unimportant Hildreth Brent at the Connecticut home of her forefathers, as a dullish event which would be at least a change from the routine of repression that made up her life with her great-aunt, Mrs. Rex Armitage.

Her father, whom she had never seen—he had been thrown by a vicious horse and brought home dying some weeks before her birth—had bequeathed her a heritage of dusky, sapphire-eyed beauty, of reckless daring, and of rebel impulses that had shadowed her childhood with the penances they entailed.

Her girlhood had been anything but joyous. She fared indifferently at the several boarding schools which were annually chosen by Mrs. Armitage, for her austere childhood, her characteristic self-consciousness among her kind, unfitted her for the friendships which make of youth a gay and vivid adventure. When, being her impetuous self, she snapped her fingers at authority and indulged in some escapade that, in another, more popular student, would have been overlooked, after a chastening lecture on the proprieties, she paid for it dearly. So each autumn saw her packed off to a different prison house, dedicated to the training of young gentlewomen.

Her school life ended abruptly on the occasion of one of her escapades, and life thereafter became even far more complicated, more restricted. She would have been almost happy in the stately, beautiful place of her birth if old Mrs. Armitage had been gentle, rather than stern; understanding rather than implacable. But her Aunt Alicia was merely her great-uncle's widow, a

childless woman of seventy who had forgotten her own youth, or preferred, perhaps, not to recall it.

Quite unnaturally, the older woman had not even loved the adorable baby Dosha had been. And the child had not inspired affection in her during the adolescent period. But it never occurred to Dosha to wish that her mother were alive. She remembered her well, for she had been eight when the listless, flaxen-haired invalid, who had always traveled from place to place in search of health, had had her eternal quest cut short by death.

But when the first unpleasantness had passed Dosha reveled in the first real freedom she had ever known. She could come and go now at will. And the rolling New England countryside lured her with woodland trails, twisting white ribbons of road.

The Armitage place alone was well worth exploring. The Hall, built long enough ago to be of the purest simplicity of design, unornamented save by the fluted columns that graced the portico, loomed white as alabaster against its only background, the sky. For the house crowned a hilltop, and the gardens, the gracious irregularity of clumped hemlocks, the close-clipped lawns, which, beyond their boundaries of yew, merged into meadowlands, all lay beneath it. The property stretched for square miles.

There was a romantic quality to its beauty. Dosha, to whom a sun-dappled wood always spelled enchantment, found immeasurable delight in her solitary walks. She knew hidden places in wood and vale, recourse to which gave her an ineffable sense of joy. A certain rugged hillside often invited her, sure-footed as a young chamois, to its slate pinnacle, from which she could gaze over mile on mile of verdant country. In the beech wood, overhung by a green bank, a brook ran tumultuously over wet black stones. And the impetuous bright

stream had for her the mystic charm which running water had for the ancients. But of all these, she loved the best the orchard behind the house, and the hollow beneath it, which, sheltered and sunny, was visited first by the soft south wind of April. The warm sun of early spring invaded this lovely spot while the rest of the world was still in winter's thrall.

Part of its charm for the little Dorothea may have been due to its legend. Here, for many decades, a caravan of gypsies had come to camp each spring in their migratory passage. The child loved the dark people. As a tiny girl she had escaped her nurse whenever she could, had wandered down to the place of the tents. The strangeness of the people had worn off, in time, for they were a familiar sight in Holden. But their fascination for her never failed. In the passing of the years their regular encampment in that single sheltered spot—no one else permitted them on their land—had become as unremarked as the name that same tribe had given the Hall decades ago. For the big house on the hill was known over the countryside, not as Armitage Hall, but "Romany's Rest."

Dosha, at twenty, was almost happy, in this lonely fashion. And then her aunt, who had never before considered the necessity of youthful associations for Dosha, grew suddenly alarmed at the girl's social isolation. Feverishly she caught up the loose ends of old friendships, and that autumn and winter threw open the Hall for the first time in twenty years, with lavish entertaining.

But her parties were dull affairs, for her friends and even their children were elderly, settled. Men, however, drawn by the magnet of Dorothea's charm, soon began to appear on her horizon. Most of them bored her inexpressibly. A few of them she liked passing well. But not one of them roused her to any response.

Yet she was far from being unresponsive or cold. No one with smoldering sapphire eyes, unexpectedly blue beneath the shadow of black lashes, and a rose-red mouth that could change from the most willful to the most tender thing in the world, could be cold.

Hildreth Brent was so sure of that, and of himself, perhaps, that he persevered in his suit until Dosha, weary of her life at the "Rest," beguiled herself into a brief engagement. Mrs. Armitage put no obstacle in the path of this marriage. Indeed, she looked forward more eagerly to it than did Dosha, people said. And she showed herself generous as the wedding day, set early in May, approached.

No expense was spared on the girl's trousseau or on the wedding plans. Caterers were engaged; florists were to cull the perfections of their greenhouses to deck the long cool drawing-room in which, beneath a bower of roses, Dosha was to stand in her bridal white.

And as the weeks sped by Dosha, half bored, half pleased, had little time for anything but last-minute fittings, intent consultations on the eventful occasion, and details of the ceremony. And yet it was her unwitting suggestion that felled the whole elaborate edifice.

A few months before she had heard a young violinist play at the town house of a friend, and it was he who was engaged by Mrs. Armitage to play the wedding music. And in this rôle Alec Varesco, Hungarian gypsy violinist, all unaware of the fame that awaited him, came to the Rest one ravishing May dusk.

Neither of them ever forgot that night, whose very wind was laden with the breath of the orchard on the hill, glamorously sweet, poignant with the pathos of beauty too brief to give the passer-by anything but a pang for its fading glory. Yet it was only by an ironic chance that they happened to share its beauty, fall under its spell.

Varesco, after the briefest of interviews with the chatelaine of the Hall, was dismissed with the condescending courtesy accorded an upper servant. But instead of returning to the old-fashioned, somber chamber reserved for his use, he left the house, strolled down the garden walk toward the orchard, which he had glimpsed from his window, had passed on his drive from the station.

A flirtatious maid had served him the supper he had been unable to procure on the train, and had responded coquettishly to the advances that Varesco could not help making to any pretty woman. The shine in his dark eyes, the challenge on his lips, was far more eloquent than his excellent English. In the language of the heart, his own light heart, Alec was supreme. The tryst was easily made, he thought contemptuously afterward, as half-heartedly he sauntered past the hemlocks, velvet dark by dusk, to keep it. For he knew the silly girl would be there.

While Mrs. Armitage had interviewed him he had managed to keep an advantageous view of the rear grounds, visible from the library windows. His pulses had quickened with the pleasant warmth of satisfied vanity when, against the clumped trees, the hyacinthine sky, a pale wraith had moved swiftly out of sight, a flash of white in the dusk.

Now the old orchard lay before him, a ravishment to the senses, offering up its transient beauty to be bruised by mortal feet. Alec, entranced, reached up to grasp a flowering branch, to strip it of its petals. Where was the girl? Not, of course, that she mattered, in the midst of this ghostly splendor.

He walked on, and saw, beyond the overburdened branches of a grotesquely gnarled tree, a human huddle of white upon the ground. The moonlight silvered it strangely, glistened on the dark sleek head. Varesco rubbed his eyes, approached nearer. This was no

moon magic, no maid servant waiting for him, transfigured by the mystic hour. A long-limbed, utterly graceful girl in a rumpled, marvelous gown of silk that glistened with patches of silver, lay at his feet, sobbing. A twig cracked under his foot. She looked up, cried out her amazement.

"You!" said Varesco.

He feasted his eyes upon her deep-blue gaze, misted now with tears; upon her warm, delicious mouth, childlike in its grief. He was remembering a certain New York drawing-room, full of wintry sunlight, the tinkle of tea things, the perfume and chatter of women. But all that, and even the ovation given him and his violin, had receded into a background for an ivory-skinned girl in a wine-red frock and hat, whose black furs had framed the poignant loveliness of her mobile face, and merged into the midnight darkness of her hair. He remembered the perfect line of her throat and chin, the wondering surprise that had been his when she raised her eyes from the tea things over which she presided and he discovered that they were not black, but blue. A gorgeous creature, that girl he had not even met! She had the suppleness, the flawless poise of a dancer or a gypsy.

And now in the old orchard that same girl sprang up, stood uncertainly before him. And he saw that she was in her wedding gown.

"Alee Varesco!" she said softly.

Rumpled, tear-stained, she could have become in an instant the great lady. But she did not, unaccountably. Her acceptance of his presence must have been part of the mad mood that had driven her to impotent tears after a last scene with her aunt; to a sort of despairing flight, in her bridal brocade.

"And I never knew that you were—you," he told her, with a curiously happy little laugh. "Why are you here, weeping, in all your bridal glory, Dosha Armitage?"

Her name, which had been ringing in his ears since the maid Margaret had uttered it, slipped caressingly from his lips.

Dorothea sighed.

"Why did you put all the lost desire in the world into the last song you played that afternoon? All your music is full of the same thing; the wild longing—its futility—You should know!"

She seemed very young, inarticulate with the intensity of what she sought to express, but her fluttering hands finished the broken sentence. Varesco understood. She was so beautiful! He stood gazing at her young loveliness, and she swayed toward him as in some incomprehensible spell.

"Don't go!" He put out an ardent hand to stay her. "If I should tell you—" he began.

She did not go.

The long dusk gave place to the unfathomable dark. And presently the moon moved behind a windy drift of cloud. But the two who sat together on the pale pall of spring were unaware of any change about them. Varesco saw only the girl's intent young beauty, the curve of her red mouth as she listened to his low, quick speech. And Dosha, the arrogant, the impetuous, sat rapt as any Desdemona as, moved by some inexplicable desire to share his very life with her, he told her of his youth, his wanderings, his bright adventures.

The spell lifted at last.

"How far you've traveled!" she cried in envy.

"Wanderlust is the passion of my race," he reminded her. "I am a gypsy, born and bred."

She nodded slowly.

"I might have guessed." Her lips curved. "It's curious that you should have come here to the Rest. Just below us, in the hollow, the gypsy caravans camp each spring. It's beautiful

there, and—for me—forbidden. But when they come, and I see their fires beckoning in the dark—something draws me away from the house, down to them." She laughed. "I'm one of you, at heart. That's why I long for release from my own cramped life; for the open road—other things, too, that I've never known!"

"We know," Varesco told her, "how to live and to love." She felt his gaze upon her mouth like a caress. A vague, sweet lassitude was stealing over her, bewildering her, frightening her, yet filling her with delight. His strong brown hand touched hers. She sprang up.

"They left only yesterday. Their ashes must still be warm."

She floated before him in the lush grass, clothed in samite now that the moon had disengaged itself and hung high above them. Varesco followed her, found himself suddenly in the cup of the hill.

It had been years since he had traveled with a Romany caravan, but the traces of his people filled him with a poignant longing for the years of his childhood, the bright fires of the night, the smoky odors of primitive food, the mad sweet music that was the motif of his life. Love and birth and death, all under the stars! At times he hungered for those primal things. His foot touched gray ash, black ghost of a fire. Here his people had sat, the women sucking their young, the men strumming their queer stringed instruments, or busy with their trade. He knelt, finding what he sought.

"They've left their patrin for any stragglers. Basket weavers, this tribe."

"They know the touchstone of happiness, I think."

Varesco's breath came quick and fast.

"You do not scorn my race." His hand reached out, touched hers, and after a moment she did not struggle

to free herself. "You do not shrink from me, my wild bird?"

Her low cry did not repulse him.

"Let me go back!"

"Never!" His arms were about her, drawing her irresistibly to his breast. His lips slid over her cheek, seeking her rebel mouth. "Dosha—you gave yourself a name of my people, strange child! How your heart beats! For me? Your lips, beloved; your lips!"

Her struggle availed her nothing. Suddenly, because his arms were a prison she would not have unbarred, because his lips, warm, desirous, drew her own by the magic lodestone of love, she yielded. Locked in each other's arms, they stood for a brief eternity.

Varesco, wordless, flung back his head. For the first time that night he remembered that he had come to this magic orchard in half-hearted willingness to meet a servant girl, whose kisses he would have filched without compunction, to satisfy his infinite, jaded curiosity in the ways of love. And instead, he had found love itself, clothed in samite.

Then Dosha spoke.

"We're mad. Moon mad I suppose. Things like this don't happen."

"It has happened!" he told her joyously.

"I've let you hold me in your arms, kiss me—and to-morrow—to-morrow I shall be another man's wife. I'm wicked."

She held him off but briefly.

"To-morrow's scheduled event shan't happen," he promised, and drew her into the shelter of his arms.

"It must happen. But—it's to-morrow! I've a right to this hour!" She lifted his handsome face, linked both hands about his neck. "Kiss me once more, Alec Varesco, that I may have something to remember." But when his lips fastened on her again he knew that he could not let her go. And presently, he told her so, quite aware

of the madness of it all. "You can't marry him, Dosha mine. Not with the memory of my lips still warm on yours, with the feel of my arms about you!"

"I must!" she mourned, and shuddered while she spoke.

"No, beloved," he pleaded with her. "This is what you must do. You must return to the house, let yourself in unseen, slip upstairs to your room. Replace this wedding gown that you will never wear with something plain and dark. I shall be waiting for you under the portico, in the shadow of the laburnums."

He sketched a hasty program. His glorious dark eyes were lit with the gay excitement that filled his soul. Here was adventure, embodied in the loveliest woman he had ever seen. He could not lose her.

The very foolhardiness of the proposal made its appeal to Dosha's reckless, daring nature. Ready always for folly and danger, she agreed breathlessly. And hours later, when the house was still, he heard her faint step in the hall. But their escape was not, after all, to be under cover of darkness and secrecy.

On the very brink of clandestine departure they were faced by old Mrs. Armitage. Perhaps she was suspicious, perhaps her presence in the library was only accidental. Like fate itself she confronted them.

It would be a long time before Dosha could forget that early morning scene. Varesco, whom such things did not affect, writhed even now at memory of it. These cold, stern puritans, he mused, who dubbed passion sin, a kiss a shameful thing! But it was not the thing she railed against that moved her to the deepest indignation. It was an old story, which Dosha had never heard, which her aunt made degrading in the telling.

It was not Dorothea Armitage who

fled from the scene of her wedding of the morrow, with a man she hardly knew. It was Dosha, granddaughter of a lovely, sullen gypsy girl whom Paul Armitage had found abandoned by her lover and her tribe, because his older brother, Rex, had met her in the birch wood the night before his own wedding, had made the sort of love to her that is born of the flagon. No wonder Rex's widow had little love for this miniature edition of the gypsy girl who called herself "Dosha" even in her babyhood! For she had come home to the Hall after her wedding journey, to find Paul, the quixotic, and his strange bride already established there in the left wing.

It was a pathetic tale that old Mrs. Armitage told so bitterly. A tale of a lonely, unloved girl transplanted from the wild free life which belonged to her, into a somber house, peopled with stiff automatons whose ways she could not learn. Her sister-in-law, the present implacable Mrs. Armitage, had tried to be kind, but there was little love between the two women, so strangely matched. And when the year passed at last, brought the gypsy a son, left the other woman childless, the stranger was no happier.

It was thought that the coming of the child might quell the girl's weariness, her discontent. But it could not quench the fever in her blood. And one day that other Dosha, rebellious, tired of houses and possessions, yearning for the open road, the starry sky, went down to the hollow, found there the traces of her people. She must have changed their message of sticks and grass from a warning to a welcome. Wan, weary-eyed, she watched at the windows for the blue curl of smoke to drift up from behind the orchard. One day it came, and that night she crept from her husband's side, leaving her sleeping son in his cradle, and stole away.

They never saw her again.

This was the story old Mrs. Armitage told the girl, praying that it might inhibit this perilous outbreak of her wild blood.

But Varesco held out his arms to her.

"Will you come, Dosha mine—doubly mine now—or stay?"

He knew her answer before it unhesitatingly came.

When he and a weary Dosha, too weary almost to remember the ceremony that had been hastily performed in a registrar's musty office, arrived at his shabby apartment late that night, it was to find a cablegram thrust under the door.

With a wild cry of delight he read:

"Paris début promised at Elysée this month. Secure accommodations on earliest date possible. Cable sailing plans."

It was signed with the name of his concert manager.

And three days later they took passage on a small French liner bound for Havre, and, for Dosha at least, a new and ecstatic world.

CHAPTER III.

The Hôtel de Brisac, as far as one could judge from its dull stone façade, broken here and there by windows whose blinds were drawn against the early morning sunlight, still slept. The entire Rue Sainte-Germaine slept, for that matter, when at the unheard-of hour of eight Allerton mounted the steps of his sister's really imposing residence and demanded admittance.

"But madame is yet in bed," protested the elderly custodian of the comtesse's peace. "It is impossible, m'sieur, for her to receive you at this hour."

Ross Allerton chuckled, admiring, nevertheless, the dogged tenacity of the elderly Lucie, his sister's personal maid.

"Madame la comtesse is now eating breakfast. You know as well as I do

that her habits are fixed in their orbits! Announce me, please."

He did not have to wait long in the dark, chilly antechamber of the De Brisac halls of state before his sister sent for him. And he found her, as he knew he would, comfortably ensconced behind her breakfast tray in the pleasant little sitting room which defied the gloomy grandeur of all her husband's ancestors.

Affectionately she greeted him, presented an indulgent and unpowdered cheek to his lips, and told him how she loathed being descended upon before Lucie's deft hands had prepared her small, plain face for the day. In this respect Nella de Brisac had become a true Frenchwoman. She had a genuine Gallic horror of being seen without the thick, often unnecessary make-up that is dear to the heart of every Parisian.

"What on earth became of you last night, after you dashed off so suddenly?" she demanded of him.

He made himself comfortable in a long wicker chair, dubiously accepted one of her dark, Russian cigarettes.

"I wanted to speak to some one before she lost herself in the outgoing crush."

Madame de Brisac's sensitive lips quivered.

"Lost herself. That suggests, Ross, that the lady's intent was escape. Since when have you become a pursuer of dames?"

"Very recently." He leaned forward. "Nella, did you happen to notice a particularly beautiful young woman in one of the lower boxes, unaccompanied?"

"Madame Varesco?" She wondered why he drew so quick and troubled a breath. "All Paris noticed her." She fingered the morning papers in her lap. "If you've read the accounts of Varesco's triumph, you've read of his American wife. He has featured her most naïvely in his interviews."

"I know, I know." Allerton's frown

indicated his irritation. "I met her last night at a restaurant, under the oddest of circumstances. And I didn't acquit myself admirably. Yet almost any man would have reacted as I did. This is what happened, Nella."

Without reservation, he told her of the evening's adventure, its unsatisfactory ending. And, his story finished, he dropped a square gray envelope into her lap.

"This morning, by special post, this came, with the inclosure of five hundred francs."

Nella read and reread the brief, yet courteous note, studied the small, brave strokes of the words through her shell eyeglass, and strove meanwhile to conceal her amusement. Dear Ross! For all his sophistication, his languid poise, he was, on the verge of the blasé forties, very much of a romanticist. And she, having lost that bright and beautiful quality in her girlhood, was quick to defend it.

"It's rather—conclusive, isn't it?" she asked him, and handed back the letter.

"It mustn't be," he replied, carefully tucking the envelope away. "What shall I do, Nella?"

She turned, frightened. It couldn't be possible that Ross, of all people, was going to lose his cool head about another man's bride!

"I can't see the need—or the use—of doing anything, my dear," she told him.

"But I must see her. I must apologize in person."

"I very much doubt if she will receive you," she assured him cheerfully.

"I'm very sure she won't," he admitted. And then he came to the point of his impossibly early call. His sweetest, most beguiling smile lighted his grave countenance. Pleadingly he caught her jeweled fingers, retained them.

"But, Nella, if you should call upon her at her hotel as a countrywoman, as

my sister, as anything you please, there'd be no danger of her not being at home to *you*!"

She leaned back in her chair resignedly.

"Just what plan of campaign have you mapped out since midnight, my dear Ross?"

He stroked his ankle thoughtfully.

"I've thought of a great many things. And I've concluded that the best plan would be for you to entertain once more before every one leaves Paris. A musicale, say."

Her rippling laughter filled the room.

"And what do you hope to accomplish by a friendship with these Varescos," she demanded at last. "A violinist of note, yes—but an impossible person socially, certainly. A wild creature, they say, strayed from the fastnesses of Roumanian hills in a gypsy caravan! And his wife—Heaven only knows how he charmed her into marrying him, if she is what she is said to be. And he's a handsome devil; she's probably mad about him."

"She's unmistakably a lady," he told her quickly. "She might have been"—he smiled faintly—"a naughty lady, but her breeding is obvious. That's why—"

"I am to put my best foot foremost," his sister interrupted. "You amaze me, Ross. And I'm sorry that your years on the Continent have Latinized you to the point of planning your conquests in this bloodless fashion!"

A dark, angry flush crept up under his cheek bones. He rose to his feet impatiently.

"My dear Nella," he began, and then shrugged half hopelessly. It was her point of view, not his, that had changed so radically.

"It's you who are no longer the Anglo-Saxon," he told her. "You are, in fact, so utterly Gallic that you can no longer conceive of any innocent friendship between a man and a woman."

She shrugged her slim shoulders.

"Pauvre petit! I know only the code of my kind, of which you disapprove so heartily. It is lax, if you like, Ross; cynical, God knows, but it has a redeeming tolerance. And because of that tolerance"—her smile showed her exquisite teeth, made her at the moment almost beautiful—"I shall take but a short drive this afternoon, and present myself at your Circe's hotel. Now please go!"

And that was how it happened that, several hours later, Madame la Comtesse de Brisac waited in the foyer of a certain elaborate hotel, while the porter, distinctly puzzled, tried to get Madame Varesco's suite.

"But she is here, madame," he assured the waiting lady. "She and her husband arrived but this morning, and she has not gone out. I myself sent to her sitting room to take her order for luncheon. *Nom de dieu*—I have it! There has been trouble with these bells of late. Madame's telephone is undoubtedly out of order. If madame will have the goodness to follow me, I will show her to the apartment of Madame Varesco!"

The Countess de Brisac considered. Was it possible that her unwitting hostess was deliberately secluding herself from all callers in this fashion? She doubted it. It would be too easy simply to tell the porter that she was at home to no one. And this trouble with the wiring was perhaps propitious. Madame Varesco might be unwilling to see a stranger. By presenting herself unannounced she would have the advantage over her. And she was extraordinarily anxious to meet the violinist's mysterious wife. She followed the attendant to the lift.

And meanwhile in the sitting room of a typical Paris hotel suite on the top floor, Dosha watched the little black box whose bell had been jangling for the past fifteen minutes. Huddled mourn-

fully in one of the ugly brown chairs, her drooping, rose-wrapped body assumed the likeness of a child—an unhappy child. With her heavy, infinitely black hair loose about her shoulders, Dosha did not suggest the arrogantly lovely woman she could be. She was merely a young, a pathetically young creature, quite at the mercy of life.

And just now, life seemed utterly merciless.

The night of Alec's débüt, which might have been divine, should have been a glory, at least, had ended in bitter disillusionment. She could have forgiven his leaving her at the restaurant, without money and alone, when, after seating herself in the box that the management had put at her disposal, she had seen him look for her, find her, and, keeping his magnificent eyes upon her, play to her alone. For she knew, as women do, that he played as he could never have played before she came into his life, filling his music with passion, glamour, intensity. A magnificent pride had swept her as she sat there, beautifully throned in the crimson and gold of the empty box. Varesco, the great violinist, was hers, in his greatness, in all his weaknesses. And whatever he was, or might become, he owed her acknowledgment of that!

Oblivious of all but his music, ecstatic at its reception, she had found the program all too short. And when, flushed, weary, albeit radiant, Alec had finished his last encore, bowed himself behind the swinging velvet curtains with a finality that not even the vociferous applause could shake, she drew her wrap about her, avoided the outgoing tide of humanity by beckoning to an usher, and requesting him to take her to Monsieur Varesco's dressing room. Once, across the sea of faces in one of the red velvet corridors, she fancied she saw the fair head of the American who had come to her rescue earlier in the evening. When he began to make his

way toward her through the crush she was sure of his identity, and, panic-stricken, she fled.

For the first time in her life the unforgettable odor of the theater—not the stuffy, faintly perfumed odor of the loges, the lobby, but the breath of the stage itself—smote her nostrils. She was being conducted behind the scenes, down dusty, dank corridors, piled with awkwardly placed sets, past men in their shirt sleeves, stagehands, electricians, the nameless hangers-on always to be found backstage in Continental theaters. Then she came to a shabby green door which bore, scrawled in white chalk, the name "Varesco," and found herself presently alone before it.

Color crimsoned her cheeks. Her breath came short and fast. That shabby, closed door seemed to fascinate her, for it gave forth mysterious, muffled sounds, sounds that ceased after a little to be mysterious. Her husband was not alone in there, awaiting her coming. Or perhaps—perhaps this mingling of speech and laughter came from the adjoining dressing room. She knocked.

Immediately the door was flung open, and a rotund, swarthy little man, whose lips were very red above the coarse blackness of his beard, swept her into the room. Half dazed, her eyes took in its untidy, crowded vista through thick veils of smoke. A very small room, it was scarcely big enough to hold the rather uproarious sextet which crowded it. The orchestra leader, a huge Slav with pale yellowish skin stretched tight over his high, broad cheek bones, dominated one corner as he poured drinks from a squat black bottle into various unsuitable makeshifts for glasses. A small, thin-lipped fellow, so hunched over that he gave one the impression of being slightly deformed, rose with a swift exclamation, displacing the girl who had perched upon his knee.

2—Ains.

Alec sat before his dressing table, sharing in the general clamor. He cut short his discourse, stared at his wife in the mirror. He was faintly ludicrous as he scowled between smears of the cold cream with which he was removing his make-up. And, on the dressing table, an exaggerated cigarette hanging from her thin bright lips, sat Fanella Gayos.

Dosha, smiling a little pitifully, knew now why she had hesitated so long on the other side of that green door. It was a barrier that might stand forever between them, as impassable mountain ranges form the boundaries of certain countries, as rivers flow deep and swift between others. He belonged there, in the garish, glaring, crowded warmth of his dressing room. She—Where did she belong? In another world, certainly; in the dark, outside world.

All this ran through her head as, in the awkward silence, she waited for him to speak. For he was unmistakably chagrined at her intrusion upon him and his friends.

"Dosha," he stammered. And then he sprang up, abandoning his displeasure like a mantle, and kissed her as if they were alone. That he could cheapen her by that kiss, in the presence of these people! Yet that was according to his standards. And because it was, she withdrew gently.

"This fat little fellow who admitted you is Bonelli—Bonelli, who had a voice like a nightingale until he grew too fat to play Prince Charming, and tried to shift his register!" He turned her about, pointed to the man who had risen. "Paul Vallon, writer of passionate odes. This is Fifi Guillaume, who is of no importance. Kromberg, there in the corner, half drunk as usual, is my orchestra leader. La Gayos you have already met—hardly that, thought Dosha—and I—let me present myself, madame. Your adoring husband, the adored Varesco!"

Vallon, with a bow which she took to be ironical, offered Dosha a glass mug of chartreuse.

"*Une cause célèbre,*" he murmured.

Alec was in the highest of spirits.

"And now, *ma belle*, where next? Parbleu, if we were not marooned in that hideous pension! A celebration could not be given there, I fear. Kromberg here will become noisy in another hour."

It was a long time afterward that she remembered that she had been in nowise jealous of these people. She was not even jealous of La Gayos, who leaned forward now to wipe a ghastly smudge of cold cream from Varesco's cheek, a service for which his eyes promised payment in a slanting glance. Not jealousy, but an utter detachment, possessed Dosha. She felt suddenly too remote from all that was happening around her to be even faintly disgusted by it. It was a shadowy pageant in an unknown country, seen from afar.

Wearily she shook her head.

"I'm sorry, but I'm tired. Another night. Will you put me in a cab, please, Alec, before you join your friends?"

And that was all. Except that she had lain for hours afterward, wide-eyed, wondering. And when, heavy-footed, Varesco arrived home—the roofs of Paris were all gilt and mauve then—it was as if she admitted a stranger. She repulsed his effort to greet her affectionately. And that, of course, made the new Alec furious. His anger! It had been an ugly thing. It had flickered out finally in wine-drugged sleep.

There was no sulkiness in Varesco's nature. He was a simple, a primitive creature, like his kind. Quick to strike, with tongue or knife, in anger, he was also quick to forget. And when he awoke at noon he had indeed forgotten all that had happened. But Dosha's chill reluctance roused him to quick wrath again. And this time her indignation matched his own.

"So," he laughed, "you are *not* jealous, my snow maiden? Bah! At this moment you would thrust a knife into the white throat of La Gayos, because you think I have kissed it!"

She wrenched herself away from him, for his lean brown hands upon her wrists weakened her, turned her hot rage to meek acquiescence. He drew her relentlessly into his arms.

"Jealousy," she told him, "is something quite different. Do not confuse it, Alec, with—disgust!"

"Disgust of La Gayos—or me?" he asked incredulously.

She shrugged, her short lip curling. "Of her kind," she said clearly.

"Her kind; I see." His eyes narrowed. "That is inclusive of—a good many of us; it includes you too, Dosha!"

His tongue lisped softly, in a deadly fashion, the syllables of the name she had given herself long ago. And then he left her.

The telephone had been ringing a long time, but Dosha had not answered it. She did not want to speak to him, see him, until the turbulent passion in her heart had worn itself out. So she sat, watching the little bell quiver. Then it stopped. She sprang up in dismay when a tap sounded on the sitting room door. That was not Alec's knock. He never knocked. He used his key. A maid, perhaps, with fresh linen.

She was totally unprepared for the plain, distinguished figure which stood in the doorway, smiling upon her with outstretched hand.

"Madame Varesco?" asked the woman graciously. "Forgive me for coming in upon you like this, but the porter brought me up. There was something wrong with your bell connection."

Dosha shook her head.

"No," she admitted helplessly, "the bell has been ringing."

"Oh!" Madame de Brisac looked

dismayed. "Then—won't you forgive me, anyway? I came partly because I have heard your husband play; partly because we are countrywomen, even though I am the widow of Comte Auguste de Brisac, and France has been my home for more than fifteen years."

Her smile, Dosha decided, was completely ravishing. It reminded her vaguely of some one else.

She felt strangely at a loss, more than a little aggrieved, and she considered excusing herself formally. But a sudden rush of homesickness, of longing for her own, swept over her, made her small hand linger in the older woman's clasp, and she murmured gratefully:

"How very kind of you, madame. I am more than glad to see you."

CHAPTER IV.

Dosha did not suspect that Nella de Brisac was Allerton's sister and emissary, and Madame de Brisac, yielding to some intuition that outweighed reason, paused twice when she had adroitly led up to the very verge of that confession, and retraced her way along the safe and pleasant routes that lie open to women of her world.

This wife of Varesco's was, obviously, no fortune huntress. Neither was she of obscure origin. Yet Nella de Brisac admitted to herself, some time later, that though she was fairly certain of what Dosha Varesco was not, she was still baffled about her. Never before had the clever widow of Auguste de Brisac failed in establishing to her precise satisfaction the status of any person in whom she found an element of mystery. But when she left Madame Varesco's sitting room it was with a curiosity that was, if anything, stimulated rather than gratified by her visit.

Perhaps she knew too well that a gentlewoman who does not lack pride of race may, in a moment's infatuation, marry beneath her, and forever after-

ward, driven by that very pride, forbid any reference to her former name and position to pass her lips. Possibly she guessed the reason for Dosha's evasive silence about herself, her past. In any event, she went home in a contented enough mood.

To Dosha, the afternoon was something to be treasured. Madame de Brisac had brought into the stuffy hotel parlor a breath from another, a well-remembered world. It was sweet to sit there with her, exchanging gossip, talking about shops and plays and people, so sweet that it made her feel faithless. But it was with a hungry sort of regret that she let her caller go at last; and her acceptance of Madame de Brisac's warm invitation to her home was eager, enthusiastic.

"I should love to come," she told her. "Paris is always Paris. Yet one can be lonely even here, I've found."

"But your husband must have hosts of friends," declared the older woman. "Geniuses always have."

"He knows a great many people," said Dosha quietly, remembering with remorse the people he did know.

And Nella de Brisac understood.

* Three days later she wrote to Dosha, charmingly and at some length. Would Monsieur Varesco play for her and a small group of her friends, and make the reception she was planning a fortnight hence the success of the season? She could only hope, of course, that he would include her musicale among his many engagements. She went on to thank Dosha for a delightful afternoon, and ended with the cordial hope that she would see them both at the Hôtel de Brisac on the appointed night.

The letter came by an early post, and with varied delight Dosha read it over her single service of fruit and chocolate and crisp rolls. She glanced toward the bed, where Alec lay against the tumbled pillows, buried in the morning papers. He had played the night before, and, as

usual, took naïve delight in the columns dedicated to him.

Her eyes softened as he stretched and yawned, hands clasped behind his tousled head. Sleepy-eyed, gay, he looked ridiculously young as he lay back lazily on the pillows, then sprang suddenly to a sitting posture to pour out the rank black coffee that made his breakfast. Yet it still shocked her secretly that he could breakfast in comfort before he had bathed or shaved. It revolted her fastidious soul to admit it, but he maintained a primitive disregard for many of the niceties of life that were habitual with her.

"From Madame de Brisac," she said, handing him the note.

He examined the crested envelope with ingenuous awe.

"Your countess, eh? What has she to write you about?"

She knew, as he read the note, that he was inordinately pleased to have her on such cordial terms with this woman of importance.

"So she wants me to play for her and a 'small group of her friends!' That doesn't sound particularly lucrative. She does not mention the matter of money!" he observed bluntly.

Dosha shrugged impatiently, drew in her breath quickly.

"Because she happens to realize that I'd think her quite ill-bred if she did mention it. You see, she's called on me, Alec. If you accept, we shall be, primarily, guests of honor."

"But the money! We are not living on air," he reminded her excitedly. "And my terms with the Elysée are absurd. I should never have accepted the offer if it had not been so near the end of the season!"

Dosha's voice of enchantment was cool and very crisp.

"You will be well paid," she told him. "Madame de Brisac will without a doubt send you a handsome check the morning after the musicale, which you will

acknowledge with a note of thanks. That is how these things are done."

"By you and your kind," he snarled. "You are so everlastingly subtle, *ma p'tite*!"

She was very close to tears.

"Please," she begged piteously, and, remorseful, he won forgiveness as he always could.

So it happened that until the night of Nella de Brisac's coup d'état Dosha remained in ignorance of the relationship between Alec's engaging patroness and the distinguished American who had come to her aid, cynically enough, on the night of her husband's first dereliction.

She did not see Madame de Brisac again in the interim, and she felt poignantly the need of companionship with her own kind. She admitted it, telling herself that Alec's submersion in his own affairs was the reason for her loneliness. If she had dwelt upon the subject, she would have realized that most of the time they had in fact been together. For, after a brief space of indecision, he had decided to include her in his old life, which little by little he was reliving in Anton Bonelli's crowded quarters, or in the brilliantly bohemian atmosphere of La Gayos' apartment, at the other, more fashionable, end of Paris.

Even the rising star of the musical firmament was partially obscured in the flame-haired dancer's exotic drawing-room, for it was scintillant with constellations already risen. She had the gift of surrounding herself with those who would be most useful to her, La Gayos.

It happened that Dosha and her husband were supping at Fenella's apartment the night after his rather flowery acceptance of the invitation to l'Hôtel de Brisac. The dancer, lying as completely relaxed as a kitten on a low, tapestried divan, smiled at the childlike satisfaction with which he recounted the incident of the countess' call. Her long,

topaz-hued eyes contemplated him thoughtfully.

"And so," he concluded, "it seems that we are to be taken up by this expatriated American. Ah, well, money has its uses, certainly! These rich countrywomen of my wife's have a weakness for artists of the bow and brush!"

Her long, gracile hand touched his.

"For the romantic," she drawled. "For amorous glances skillfully sent, for love-making of subtler technique than that to which they are accustomed!"

Dosha, who stood talking to Paul Vallon, whom she almost liked, listened to the badinage of two on the couch, who, in the midst of a crowded room, had achieved a privacy that made itself felt.

Varesco arched mocking brows above eyes which held anything but mockery, as they fastened upon the lovely creature before him.

"It is, regrettably, a world of men and women, *chére!* But this time you are mistaken. It is Dosha who has enslaved Madame de Brisac, not I!" He bent low over the brocaded couch, drew La Gayos to her incomparable feet, a swift strong gesture which gave him the opportunity to add, under his breath:

"You need not be jealous!"

Of all the crowded room, only Dosha saw his lips form the unimportant, perhaps lightly used, phrase; saw his glance invest it with a thousandfold intent. But Paul Vallon read its meaning in her stricken eyes, and for perhaps the first time was moved to pity her. Was it possible that she still failed to interpret Varesco's nature and its restless demands? Was she blinded by love of the man or by the innocence that sheathed her like a bright, impregnable garment?

He smiled down at her, small, ugly, marked with the pitiable distinction of the misformed.

"They speak of the weakness of women for the creative male; Fanella ignores the function of those women. It is they who make the artist."

She remembered how casually Alec had mentioned the many women who had figured briefly in his youth, how casually she had accepted them, as the unsubstantial images that they were.

"No one experience, no single entity can form and complete the instrument of all emotion," he continued in his dry, passionless voice of the theorist. "And an artist, a real artist in any medium, must be primarily the living instrument of knowledge, of beauty, of passion. Only through him can the rest of us have contact with these ideals of life."

Dosha drew the coque feathers of her fan through her slender fingers. Beautifully posed against the cold stone of the wall—La Gayos had established herself in an upper floor of what once had been a prince's austere and spacious home—she suggested, in the lucid green of her gown, which molded itself to her slenderness, a figure cut in jade rather than a flesh-and-blood woman. There was the intentness of graven stone in her posture. The poet thought not of Galatea, about to come to life, made sentient by the breath of love, but of the legendary maiden whom fear had changed from flesh to marble.

"You believe that no one love can ever suffice, or endure in, the heart of such a man, then?"

"Dear madame!" His tragic, wise eyes, the eyes of a cripple, belied the twisted smile on his lips. "These instruments of love and laughter, of pain and rapture that is insupportably close to pain, are not burdened with that so necessary appendage of yours and mine, a heart. A heart is an anchor that, by weight of its own sorrow, long stored, keeps one earthbound. He"—Vallon nodded ever so slightly toward Alec, who had lifted his violin—"can touch the stars!"

"Alone." She turned away. "I am sorry for the women who love these men."

"I pity them from the depths of my heart," he told her, and lifted his head raptly as Varesco drew the first magic notes from his strings.

Alec was in a gay mood this night. Happy song dripped from his agile bow like iridescent dew, too fine, too delicately bright and fair to last. Fantasy claimed him for her own. And then, perhaps because Fanella Gayos laid upon him the spell of her golden panther's eyes, his humor changed. His music took on a subtler, more plaintive strain. It shivered now through the breathless, hazy room like some wild sweet wind, burdened with a mating cry.

"This is yours, Fenella. It is a dance I remember from my childhood; a dance of my people."

He played on in a sort of ecstasy, his own supple body swaying to the irresistible call of the air. Fenella caught up a fringed shawl, drew it about her.

"It has a story, like all folk dances. It is the dance of the forsaken."

And then La Gayos began to dance. Her beautiful body was a triumph of motion as she circled him. His music, sweet as the pipes of Pan, brought her hovering close, flitting in and out of invisible glades, tempting him with all her grace. But Alec, full lips parted, eyes alight under gay brows, would have none of her. His music was a sweet taunt now.

Dosha, intent upon the glorious abandon of the dance, watched it with quickened breath. She seemed to be transported from the close, elaborate room to a certain sheltered hollow swept with breezes sweetened in the full-blooming orchard on the hillside. She had seen this before. When the dark people came to the Rest the women were wont to dance in the firelight. And

when they danced it was with this abandoned, elemental grace, symbol of a primitive need.

"And now, forsaken one, your coaxing turns to something very different. You hate me. There is a knife in your girdle, sharp and bright," directed Varesco. And Fenella became venom incarnate as she flung back her flaming head, let him see the cold gleam of steel. The music from his bow rose to unbearable heights of passion and despair. She drew nearer, and then, with a last perfect gesture, as, still mocking her, he continued to evade her, she flung herself upon him, and the knife flashed horribly against his heart.

His magnificent finale drowned the cry that escaped Dosha's lips, luckily. And only Paul Vallon noticed her pallor while La Gayos' guests crowded about her and Varesco.

It had been an unexpected performance—Fenella rarely danced for the private entertainment of her guests—and a memorable one. But supper was announced presently, and the performance was forgotten in the ensuing gaiety. Only Dosha remembered the glamorous lure of La Gayos, as, pantherlike, she had circled her prey. The very phrasing of her thought brought a smile to Dosha's lips. Alec, as any woman's prey!

It was late when they left the apartment of the danseuse, found a stray fiacre at the corner. Dosha, drooped with weariness. Alec, to whom her appeal these days was poignant, found her enchanting in her passivity.

Once in their rooms, he gathered her into his arms with a tenderness new to him.

"Tired child! Did you like my music?"

"It was magnificent." She longed to be magnificent, too. "All it needed was La Gayos."

He nodded, humming the haunting, passionate air.

"I must not forget that. It is well worth remembering."

"Play it as an encore for Madame de Brisac!" she begged.

She wanted desperately for the whole world to know him at his talented best. His compositions were so few.

He frowned.

"It is nothing without the dance. And Fenella—bah! I cannot have her share my laurels. Besides"—his impish smile danced in his eyes, on his eager, sensitive lips—"la belle Fenella is becoming a trifle—shall we say, impertinent? She takes too much for granted, after a space of years!"

Strangely enough, her heart did not leap at the careless words. She eyed him curiously across her laced fingers.

"At times," she told him, "I have thought she didn't take too much for granted. So you don't love her?"

"No," he told her truthfully, "I don't love her. I loved her quite madly once, but that was many years ago. Believe me, heart of my heart!"

She smiled, released herself from his arms.

"I do."

Something in her measured tone troubled him, but he easily reverted to the more important matter in hand.

"My 'Dance of the Forsaken'—I should like to play that at this musicale your countess is giving!"

He caught an excited breath as she postured her gracile body as Fenella had done, swayed toward him.

"Dosha," he cried, "you shall dance for me! I am a fool! I might have known that you had inherited the natural grace, the instincts of the dancers of the world."

"I?"

She stared at him, horrified. Was he suggesting that she, Dorothea Armitage, display herself like a professional before a drawing-room filled with people?

He laughed happily.

"You! You have the grace, the poise

of a bird, the dramatic instinct of a tragedienne. To-morrow the best ballet master in Paris shall take you in hand!"

"I think you must be mad," she told him slowly. "You want me, *me* to dress myself in gypsy garb, dance professionally!"

His quick temper sprang out at her like an unleashed beast. She might have known that her attitude alone was enough to rouse him to fury.

"How often," he cried, "are you going to forget that you are no longer the niece of the magnificent Mrs. Armitage, but Dosha Varesco, and mine!"

His strong brown hand shot out, grasped her wrist, wrenched her to him.

"You shall do as I bid you! You want your Madame de Brisac to think you the great lady, eh? Well, she shall see you in another rôle. Do you think I am a blind fool, that I have not seen you draw aside your skirts from my friends, treat them like inferiors? You deem yourself too fine for them, I suppose?"

Dosha was pale with suppressed indignation, silent only because she dared not speak.

"Too fine for them!" He laughed. "You that are, in spite of your magnificent airs, nothing but a gypsy wench."

"Oh!" she cried sharply.

The horror in her stricken eyes, her shuddering, protesting hands, goaded him on.

"You hate your wild blood; you try to quell it, conquer it, uselessly, Dosha. Yet it runs strong in your veins, shapes your very destiny!"

"No!"

"Think a moment!" He came close to her, gripped her shrinking shoulders. "It urged you to rebellion through all your restless youth, wrested you from your sedate heritage. And—this is the irony of it, Dosha mine—it sent you into my arms, that first night we met. It was not Dorothea Armitage who yielded to the love-making of a wander-

ing musician, gave him her lips, her heart. It was Dosha, the nameless dark-skinned woman who bequeathed you her nature as well as her deep-eyed beauty. It would be well for you to remember that always!"

She tore at his ruthless hands.

"Let me go or I shall hate you utterly."

"Hate me then! But obey me. And remember that you are mine, and that I shall keep you."

His beautiful dark face, so close to hers, seemed to her frightened, furious eyes to become sinister, vindictive.

"You forget that wild blood of mine," she told him. "It is rebellious, it is reckless, you have just pointed out. It knows no restraint or fear. Be careful, Alec!"

"I like you when you are angry," he murmured dangerously. "But don't rouse my own temper too far, Dosha. It is an evil thing. Fenella could tell you something of it—or show you a white scar she still bears. So do not trust to your wild, rebellious heart. The women of my people—and yours—are rebels, too. But always they are mastered. They learn restraint, and even fear.

"You will dance that dance of your race to my music, before your friends, as I bid you."

The magic of illusion seemed to drop from her eyes, and she saw Varesco, the great, as he was, a child of the primitive, strong and beautiful and ruthless as nature itself, cruel because he knew only the law of his kind, which seemed incompatible with gentleness or justice. And to that primal creature had been given one of the greatest gifts of the ages. It was grotesque. That gift of his was remote from his mortal part. He was a hot-blooded wanderer, strayed from a gypsy caravan. He was capable of subduing a woman with a blow from his fist if need be; of killing her, perhaps.

Dosha stood silent, passive in his grasp for a long moment.

"You might beat me, I suppose," she reflected at length. "You might even kill me. You can, I fancy, force me to do what I don't want to do. But you can't do it for always, Alec." Her voice did not betray the passion that surged up in her heart. Her long lashes drooped over the gleam of her half-shut eyes. "For I am not wholly yours. I shall never be. And the elusive part of me, the part of me that loathes you, scorns you, is more enduring than my lips, that may meet yours again, that you won so easily."

Apparently submissive, she mocked his mastery with a smile. And Varesco, darkly flushed with a desperate and futile rage which sent its red tide up to his brow, was maddened by that smile.

His hand shot out, and Dosha, sick and faint, reeled back from the impact of the first blow she had ever known. Steadying herself against the wall, she raised one hand to her pallid cheek, on which already a dark mark was beginning to appear, drew it away wet. The hand that had struck her wore an ornate ring, and its highly mounted stone was responsible for the crimson trickle down her chin. Ghostlike, she saw herself mirrored in a glass across the room, so pale that she wondered fantastically if all the blood in her body could be escaping from that irregular gash.

Then the shame and horror of it swept over her. This man, her husband, had struck her! She had married a man whose code included wife-beating. This was probably incidental to him, might become incidental in time to her as well.

She began to laugh hysterically, still leaning against the supporting wall. And her laughter affected Varesco horribly.

"Dosha!" he cried, his face twitching. "You drove me to it, I tell you."

Her knees felt very weak. She realized that she was becoming more and more hysterical, controlled herself with an effort. The little trickle of red was spreading over her shoulder, on the bodice of her beautiful jade-colored gown.

"I'm wrong," she told him. "I can be beaten—I am! No man has ever struck me before. I didn't know what a blow could do. It can kill the proud, unyielding soul of any woman. It's killed mine, that I thought was invincible."

"Dosh!" he cried again in a strangled voice.

Her trembling hand stole up to her cheek, shrank from the wound. Ashamed, speechless, sullen, he turned from her, did not see her sway forward. She crumpled slowly as the chill of faintness enveloped her, and he was at the other end of the room when she fell with a soft thud to the floor.

She lay there, a still huddle of green brocade. He dropped to his knees beside her in an anguish of contrition, sobbing under his breath as he pillow'd her hurt head on his arm, and raised her gently, to lay her upon a near-by sofa. But she did not hear him.

CHAPTER V.

The Hôtel de Brisac was brilliantly lit from basement to roof. The open doors, guarded by powdered footmen in plum-colored livery, gave the pedestrian a glimpse into vast halls of dazzling light. The amazingly lovely effect of the polished floors, which mirrored perfectly each crystal pendant in the sparkling chandeliers, invited the passer-by to linger until an insistent gendarme strolled menacingly toward him.

The pale stone steps, carpeted with crimson, were flanked at the foot by another pair of attendants, and the rich carpet extended to the curb, as if awaiting royal feet. One would have thought

that only a princeling could exact such magnificence. But Madame de Brisac was merely giving a musicale, at which the center of interest was to be the newly famous Varesco.

Paris is given to late hours for her diversions, and it was long after ten before the first motors drew up before the red carpeting, and fashionable Paris descended.

But even after the steady stream of cars had thinned out appreciably, and the crimson-draped steps were empty of the gorgeously cloaked women and their escorts, whose ascent had been a procession, the most important guests had not arrived. Monsieur and Madame Varesco, who were awaited with impatient curiosity, were exceedingly late.

The drawing-rooms were crowded, and some of the guests still lingered on the lower floor, although the musical program was under way. Ross Allerton, guiltily avoiding his sister's eye, remained in the foyer. He had a perfectly valid excuse in the blond comedienne who had that season taken the Théâtre Française by storm.

Natalie Dupres, seemingly without guile in white chiffon *à la jeune fille*, according to Doucet, cut square across her celebrated throat and shoulders, played with the single, looped strand of pearls she wore and fixed her wide, greenish eyes upon the man beside her.

Those remarkable eyes, framed with curved, fairish lashes that she was too clever to darken, for they were tipped with gold, seldom failed to retain the attention of the man they looked upon. But Allerton was not even conscious of their glamorous gaze.

"Your famous Varesco is anything but prompt," she murmured. "Or possibly he has interpreted the invitation of madame merely as an engagement."

Allerton shook his head.

"Hardly. My sister has called on Madame Varesco."

"They say she is very beautiful."

Mademoiselle Dupres slanted her exquisitely groomed and waved blond head to one side. "*Une type mystérieuse.* Have you met her?"

"Only once." Allerton's clever mouth smiled guardedly under its small mustache. "I dare not hope that she will recall the occasion. Yes, she is beautiful."

Mademoiselle Dupres pursed her adaptable pink mouth into an exceedingly bewitching pout.

"All that is of more importance to you than to me, Monsieur Ross Allerton, for I am parching because of your neglect! Champagne, if you please."

He beckoned a passing waiter. They were sipping the golden drink appreciatively when a single car drew up outside, deposited the belated guests. There was a ripple of interest, a craning of necks. Madame la Comtesse rustled forward in her stiff, ivory-hued silks.

Allerton saw a tall, slender woman wrapped in a cloth-of-gold mantle enter the hall, followed by the violinist, heard his sister greet her almost affectionately as Madame Varesco. Yet her well-remembered face, pale, impassive, affected him curiously. There was some magic and unaccountable change in the beauty that was stamped upon his vision. It had both gained and lost something elemental, unerasable. He noticed, frowning slightly, that her rose-red mouth was heavily rouged to-night. It was like a scarlet blossom in the lily pallor of her face. But mere cosmetics could not give it that sad, proud curve, as if, unsmiling, it hid some wretched secret that would always guard it from gavety.

He moved forward. Nella linked her arm in his.

"May I present my brother, Ross Allerton, madame?"

The red lips parted breathlessly. Still holding close the fur collar of her wrap, Dosha lifted her head with a small, childishly eager gesture that trans-

formed her into the girl he remembered. The exaggerated gold hoops she wore in her ears glistened in the light.

"I have met Mr. Allerton before!"

Her dark lashes drooped. This was delicious.

"You're unbelievably kind to remember it, and me," said Allerton with the simplicity that was part of his charm.

She smiled at him briefly, and it sealed the suggestion of intimacy their shared secret gave him, before she turned to acknowledge other introductions.

Allerton stood there, marveling at the tragedy that lay in her eyes. What had happened in the few short weeks since he had seen her?

Fatefully, Natalie Dupres had paused, champagne glass in hand, as Varesco made his entry, bowed low over the slim fingers of his hostess. Left to his own devices, the violinist raised his dark brows to the comedienne, approached at her beckoning finger.

"Such fortune bestows itself only upon the undeserving!" he told her.

She curtsied, glancing at him engagingly under her gold-tipped lashes.

"Don't thank your good fortune, but Monsieur Allerton's dereliction!" She nodded toward Allerton. "I am abandoned, it would seem, to your tender mercies."

"I shall be both merciful and tender, mademoiselle," Alec promised, one hand upon his heart.

Across the room, Allerton took possession of Dosha as his sister's attention was engaged.

"I have waited a long time for to-night, madame. What penance shall I make?"

She dismissed the apology with a gesture and her sad little smile. He saw her eyes rove to her husband, who was cornered with the little actress, and already engaged in flirtation. He was intensely annoyed when Nella came back to them presently.

"Ross, you're impossible! In spite of Madame Varesco's intoxicating presence you might remember to relieve her of her wrap. And then take her upstairs. My guests have all been promised the pleasure of meeting her. You can't hope to monopolize so important a person yourself, my dear!"

Dosha, very pale, smiled at her hostess, slipped out of her wrap. She spoke very clearly, very gently, so that the shifting group about them could hear, so that Alec should turn from his love-making at the other end of the room.

"I am afraid, madame, that you do not understand."

As the furred cape slid from her shoulders Allerton caught his breath. For she stood there in the costume of a gypsy dancing girl, in velvet bodice and scarlet petticoat and painted shawl. The great gold hoops in her ears were matched in barbaric splendor by the jangling bracelets on both bare arms. There was a scarlet flower in her hair, a knife in her girdle.

"Surely you do not expect me to mingle with your guests, as one of them. I am only here, after all, to take part with my husband in entertaining you."

Nella de Brisac, well-poised woman of the world, concealed her dismay. Ross could only stare at the lithe creature before him. The whole episode was incredible, as was her pose, her manner. He glanced helplessly at his sister, whose eyes had narrowed. She was watching Varesco, who seemed absorbed in the tableau. Then, to his intense relief, she turned to Dosha with her most endearing smile.

"You're a very deceptive young woman! I had no idea that you too were an artist, Madame Varesco. You must know that such a gift makes you doubly welcome wherever you go."

She slipped her arm through Dosha's, and the black head lost its arrogant lift. One might trust Nella always to do the

gracious, the generous thing, thought her brother contentedly.

Alec had heard his wife's clearly uttered words, as she had intended that he should. Already, he was tasting the heady pleasure of being a guest instead of a hired musician, and he was regretting futilely having forced Dosha to take the rôle so distasteful to her. He had wanted to humble her, to bend her to his will, but he had not bargained for this passionless, almost disdainful insistence upon the status he had thrust upon her. But in spite of her aloof docility she winced at the response of her hostess.

His handsome, laughter-loving mouth straightened vindictively. With one slender brown hand on the barbaric red sash he had wound about his stripling's waist, in lieu of a waistcoat, he bowed low.

"Madame la comtesse is more than kind! But I am sorry that our small attempt at the unexpected should no longer be a surprise. I have something new to play to you to-night—or hardly new, for it is an ancient Romany folk dance that I have arranged. My wife, who is of my race, can dance the dances of her people as if she had never strayed away from them!"

Then, with another formal bow, he turned to Mademoiselle Dupres.

Ross Allerton, confused, dismayed, was aware of the triumphant lift of his sister's head as she swept past him, bearing Dosha upstairs. It was incredible that this exquisite, delicately molded woman could be of the same breed as the dark-skinned musician she had married. And yet, it must be so. He had fancied that, at her husband's words, her natural pallor became even more pronounced, so that, under the film of powder, a faintly reddish scar on her cheek showed. But at that point she had turned away. Was she ashamed then of her alien blood?

During the brief time that intervened

between her arrival and her husband's performance Dosha was lost to Allerton. As usual, his sister's house was crowded with her amazingly catholic tiers of friends and acquaintances. This mingled coterie of hers shared one distinction, however; the distinction of rank. She had the faculty of being able to put her finger unfailingly upon people who were about to achieve fame, so some of her friends said. Others, perhaps the more discerning, suggested that it might easily be her own social supremacy which was able to raise them several rungs on the ladder of recognition. At any rate, none of her artistic clique were obscure after they left the Hôtel de Brisac!

Natalie Dupres was an example in question. The little comedienne had not been a notable when she had first appeared in Nella's salon. Few had known about her. But her wit, her exuberant charm, her Dresden prettiness, intriguingly belied by those world-old, gold-flecked green eyes of hers, established her in the minds of those who met her. That night at dinner she was placed between an English marquis who set fashions, and a famous dramatic critic who made actresses. The combination was unbeatable. A week later the little Dupres was starred.

Allerton, who had never been especially interested in her, was watching her to-night with more intentness than he had ever shown. Had she but known it, his sole interest in her lay in her gayly maneuvered flirtation with the violinist. Varesco left her side—but once, and then at Madame de Brisac's command, and sulkily enough.

He had a way with women, this wandering minstrel! The comedienne had forgotten the very existence of Ross Allerton, whom she had been attempting to enslave for months. This to the amusement of his sister, who knew how wary of women he was.

Varesco was to play at midnight.

Dosha, a little dazed by the scores of men and women she had met, by the homage paid her as wife of the newly acclaimed virtuoso, slipped away from the brilliant scene to the small room which Madame de Brisac had given over to her use, on learning that she was to dance. There, in the quiet dark, she hid her flushed face in her hands, gave way to demoralizing terror of the ordeal that confronted her. But her weakness was of brief duration. Madame de Brisac's own maid tapped on the door, offering her services.

The Frenchwoman was kneeling to the task of tying Dosha's small slippers when, without knocking, Varesco flung himself into the room, dismissed the serving woman peremptorily.

"What is it?" Dosha asked him, frightened.

His very presence put a barrier between them, a barrier whose intangibility only rendered it the more impregnable. Alec, who had beaten against it vainly since the night he had struck her, paused, his dark eyes rather pathetic in their mute pleading.

"Nothing much. I wanted to tell you—I'm sorry!" he said.

Thoughtfully she looked at him.

"It's a little late for that. If your generosity had engulfed you sooner—" She laughed, slender hands linked about her knee. "Conquest always puts you in a generous mood, doesn't it? Your little actress must have yielded easily to your blandishments!"

Her mockery, her dispassionate coldness, both born of his cruelty, betrayed the Dosha he did not know. He did not dare to storm at her, or to cross the small space that separated them, sweep her into his arms.

"She's nothing to me," he told her with conviction. "Less than nothing. Let me fasten your slipper, Dosha."

She bent, tied it herself, and, snapping on the light above the mirror, ex-

amined her features carefully, powder puff poised.

"One would have thought from your love-making in the conservatory that she meant a great deal to you. My felicitations on your dramatic ability!"

He flushed darkly.

"If you were kind to me, Dosha, there would be no occasion for your contempt. I would be eternally, wholly yours."

At her contemptuous smile his eager arms, held out to her, dropped to his side. To his own unending amazement he had not risked even a caress since she had come back to consciousness that hideous night of their quarrel, gestured to her bleeding cheek when he had sought to take her in his arms, kiss the wound he had caused. That gesture, her cold, unfrightened gaze, had probed his troubled soul, had kept him at arm's length.

"It is almost time for you to play," she reminded him.

He left her for the velvet-hung, improvised stage at one end of the great music room.

That night Varesco played with his customary superb form, but of all the numbers, the "Dance of the Forsaken" was the memorable one. For the romantic and mysterious Madame Varesco danced it magnificently.

The first wild sweet notes brought her out of some moon-lit dell, ill-fated follower of the eternal lover's stringed song. From her slow, entranced pursuit the dance became an irresistible, an abandoned plea. But her tempting availed her nothing. The beguiling sweetness of the music quickened to a gay taunt. She was the forsaken, now. And her despair changed to a passionate vengeance. Circling him as he withdrew, still taunting her with a melody that thrilled with its insouciant, cruel delight, she took from her bosom a gleaming blade. His song mocked her still. Then, to match her own anguished

and desperate mood, it rose to a pitch of triumphant pain, of futile despair. She was a mænad, a symbol of doom.

But she, not he, was the doomed. As he wrung the last wild note from his violin she raised the knife, her eyes, fixed upon him, hinting at some sad triumph. It fell. But not aslant his own heart. With a symbolism that he could not but understand she seemed to drive it into her own bosom, swayed with perfect artistry to the floor. And the crimson curtain dropped.

Although the applause was prolonged and insistent they did not reappear. Alec, strangely shaken, saw her spring to her feet, leave the stage to him. In response to the rising tide of enthusiasm the curtain parted, and he bowed and bowed again. Stepping backward his foot struck something. He glanced down and saw the knife she had used in the dance. Some impulse moved him to pick it up, and he shuddered.

In the confusion which followed it was easy for Dosha to lose herself. The despair she had pantomimed lay heavy in her heart. She wanted only to escape the curious world.

The library, cool and dark and untenanted, beckoned to her. She slipped inside, shut the door behind her.

Utterly desolate, she stumbled to the great chair that was drawn up to a Jacobean table, dropped into it, burying her head in her outstretched arms.

The great room was very still. Its twilight peace served only to emphasize the tumultuous anguish that possessed her, body and spirit. Hot tears blurred her lashes. A sob wrenches her. Soon she was weeping, quietly, desperately, with the ceaseless, strangling sobs of utter misery.

She did not even hear the door open gently, close again. Allerton stood over her, pity etched upon his fine, firm face. His usually languid gaze was troubled, intent, as he stretched out his hand, laid it on the dark sheen of her hair.

"Poor child!"

She looked up, and, the old training reasserting itself, managed a sort of childish dignity. She could not know that her pale beauty, tear marked, wan, was more poignantly appealing to the man than the eager, happy creature he had first seen.

"So this is why you could dance as you did!" he murmured. "One cannot depict despair so perfectly without having known it."

It would have been grotesque to ignore the passion of her grief. She discovered that she did not shrink from his calm acceptance of it, from his presence, even.

"I am very unhappy," she told him simply. "But I am very foolish, to weep like this. If any one but you had come in and found me——"

She strove to pat away the ravages of her tears with her inadequate wisp of a handkerchief.

"It's so cowardly to cry out against fate, so futile!" Her sad lips curved in a bitter little smile. "And so very destructive to one's looks. My tears are all shed! Will you forget that you have seen them?"

She laid her hand on his arm gravely. He lifted it to his lips.

"I understand, madame. Yes, on condition of our friendship, pledged from to-night!" His voice lost its lightness. "May I tell you that you are as brave as you are beautiful?"

After a little, her poise regained, he saw her listen for the murmur of speech and laughter that drifted in to them.

"Shall I take you back to the others?" he asked.

"Oh, no!" she pleaded.

He went to the silk-hung French windows, opened them invitingly upon the fretted iron balcony.

"It would be pleasant out there, perhaps. There's a very small excuse for a garden, but the shrubs are all in bloom."

She preceded him through the glass doors, sighed her delight. A flowering horse-chestnut tree was visible above the high stone wall, and its dim white blossoms, its heady sweetness, brought heartbreaking memories of home to her.

They seemed to share each other's thoughts.

"Sometimes," said Allerton rather wistfully, "I'd give all the tempting boulevards of Paris for a certain Long Island orchard. These spicy odors make me long for something quite different—garden scents, wet winds from the sea——"

"Home!" said Dosha yearningly. And then, remembering that she was one of the homeless ones, choked back her tears.

CHAPTER VI.

After her musicale Nella de Brisac faced her brother with a triumphant and dutiful air which amused him exceedingly. She had done an absurd, an expensive thing to gratify a mere whim of his, and she had the complacent satisfaction of knowing that this semiquixotic move of hers had proved to her own advantage.

"I'm exhausted," she declared, "simply exhausted. But it was worth it. Even the Marquise de Saulles said it was a huge success, and meant it. And that's genuine praise, for she's as deaf as a post and couldn't possibly hear Varesco!"

He shrugged.

"All your parties are successful, Nella. Your own enthusiasms are contagious!"

She came up to him, looking rather old and plain in the queer dawn light that crept in through the curtains, and showed the disorder of the room. There is nothing more depressing than the aftermath of pleasure, and its abandoned vessels. She put her hands on his shoulders.

"Ross, you see now that I was right

about these Varescos, don't you? She's beautiful, of course, and everything that's charming. I'm old enough and honest enough to admit that. But she's—of a different breed! And even if she were not, she's another man's wife."

"My dear Nella—" He paused, somewhat at a loss. "I happen to know a good deal more about her than you do, it seems."

"You had every opportunity to learn," she told him dryly.

"She told me not a little about herself, her people. She's a Connecticut Armitage." That assertion had its effect. For as long away from home as his sister had been, she well remembered the distinction of the Armitages. "The strain of alien blood is not enough, surely, to color her whole life! I don't doubt but that her extraordinary beauty, her vitality, hark back to it, as far as that goes. Most of our sort need a fusion of a primitive race in our out-bred stock!"

She softened.

"But how in the name of Heaven did she ever marry that man, Ross!"

"He's very much of a Don Juan," her brother reminded her, thinking of the tableau he had come upon once that night, and frowning at the thought. "And she was brought up by an elderly great-aunt."

Nella de Brisac sighed.

"I am the last person in the world to look sternly upon a mad marriage," she admitted. "Young girls are prone to romantic folly. I of all people should know that! But, Rose, it frightens me when you defend her!"

He turned moodily away.

"I only defend her from your allegations, my dear!"

She let him light one of her long, brown cigarettes, inhaled pleasurable.

"Well, why shouldn't I be anxious? She's the first woman who has pierced your impenetrable armor in ten years! And she's the last woman I'd wish to

see achieving that distinction. Alec Varesco is primitive. He wouldn't hesitate to kill you if he thought you were taking his wife from him, neglect her though he does himself!"

Allerton was too clever to commit himself by answering her seriously.

"And so it behooves you, *ma savur*, to see that such a notion does not enter his handsome head. I admit, attentions had far better come from you than from me. But really, Nella, you must take the girl under your sheltering wing. You can make her, socially; you can make any woman in Paris, for that matter."

And their conversation was responsible for a great deal of Dosha's uncertain happiness during the ensuing weeks. When, between her numerous social engagements, Dosha had time to think, she realized that Varesco had nothing to do with it. For that matter, his very life these days had little enough in common with hers. For his entire time was taken up with rehearsals, with performances, and with Natalie Dupres.

Dosha, still holding herself inaccessible aloof from him, was not dependent upon outside sources for her knowledge of his whereabouts. Though all Paris saw the blond comedienne and the newly risen virtuoso driving in the Bois, dining in the gayer cafés, Dosha was informed of these occasions by Alec himself.

Her pleasant friendship with Madame de Brisac's brother grew apace. He was always at his sister's, and it simply happened that he escorted her about a good deal. Naturally, Varesco was usually included in his invitations extended to his wife, but more often than not he declined.

"Personally, *ma belle*, I find high life anything but amusing!" he would tell her, and go forth to seek diversions of another sort.

But on one memorable occasion he inconsistently demanded that she accept

an invitation which she would have preferred to refuse. Just why he did so, she hardly knew at the time.

Dosha had spent a luxurious morning with Nella de Brisac in the Rue de la Paix, trying on hats conceived and executed by an artist whose wrought-iron portals opened only to the fortunate recipients of formal invitations. A pretty woman at a milliner's is one of the concrete examples of earthly happiness that are so hard to find. With a carefully chosen, very expensive black hat drawn low upon her smartly coifed head young Madame Varesco emerged from the sacred edifice and stepped into her friend's brougham.

The countess surveyed her with approbation.

"Quite perfect, my dear! Anything as nunlike as black crape needs a particularly dashing hat to set it off!"

Only that morning she had said to her brother:

"I'm not only indulgent to you, Ross; I'm playing the fool. Even you couldn't expect me to do more than share my modiste, my pet milliner, with Dosha Varesco! As far as that goes, a woman is incapable of a higher degree of friendship!"

He had laughed at her, narrowing his lazy gray eyes affectionately.

"My dear girl, you won't admit it, but your protégé gives you your chief interest in life! And quite apart from your obvious affection for her, you must know that you gain a certain prestige from her. Varesco is the idol of Paris."

She had looked at him slyly as she drew on her suède gloves.

"What more are you about to ask of me?" she wondered aloud. "I tell you frankly, Ross, that I've almost reached the end of my tether. People are beginning to talk, and I won't have that—in Paris! If her husband had not involved himself so deeply with Natalie Dupres I might give you more leeway."

His eyes were sunny.

"Come, come, my dear Nella. Run along, or you'll be late. Where are you lunching?"

"Dosha has never been in the Ritz," she told him innocently; and added hastily: "Now, Ross, I won't have you meeting us there!"

Was any devoted sister so tried, she wondered, as they rolled up the Bois. She almost found it in her heart to be bitter toward the lovely creature beside her.

That was a happy day for Dosha. The sun-dappled green of the trees and grass, the virgin blue of the sky, against which the stone heights and spires of the immortal city, drenched with the morning's irreducible gold, stood out in a delicate bright tracery, the more or less elegant procession of motors and landaulets that filled the boulevards, all gave her keen delight. But what pleased her most, she remembered afterward, was the sight of Ross Allerton's distinguished person in the colorful lobby.

He lounged forward to meet them, ignoring his sister's disapproving frown. And presently, at a particularly well-chosen table for three, they were enjoying a luncheon Allerton had already ordered in collaboration with the head waiter.

"Do you ever engage in any arduous enterprise, Mr. Allerton?" asked Dosha demurely. "You seem chiefly occupied with diverting yourself at all times."

"Which is in itself a heavyish task," he told her. "But you wouldn't call me indolent if you had been with me this morning. I've been training at the stables."

"Are you fond of horses?" asked Madame de Brisac of the girl. "My brother has inherited from his Kentucky forbears a passion for them. He has one of the best stables in Paris." She grimaced. "I speak with authority; I've helped pick out a good many of his winners!"

"I adore them!"

"Then come and see me ride Bonny May to glory at the Longchamps races," he said promptly. "I'm my own jockey."

"I've already asked Madame Varesco and her husband to join my party," put in Nella smoothly.

She was perfectly willing to have her little protégée number among her guests. Ross would be safely engaged with his jockeying, and she had asked a handful of attractive men who would immediately take possession of Dosha.

Soon they were deep in a discussion of horses. Dosha, who knew a prize mount when she saw one, and could ride any, had been looking forward with the utmost pleasure to the races. Now that she knew Allerton was to ride his own entry, her interest was doubled. She looked at him appraisingly. His air of inertia, of indolence, was most deceptive. For every sure movement of his body showed him to be supple from scheduled exercise, muscled with steel. She watched his well-shaped, well-tanned hands idly. Their grasp would be irresistible, she thought, and her pale cheeks were briefly dyed with rose.

They were gayly discussing the coming races when Dosha noticed the tremor of interest which turned all heads at neighboring tables toward the entrance of the grill. She was still naive enough to be intrigued by the sight of any notable, and she followed their curious glances eagerly.

A small, golden-haired woman in white followed the waiter among the small tables, holding a scarlet enameled walking stick as though it were the crook of a *Watteau* shepherdess. There was something faintly familiar about her, swathed as she was in the white motor veil that hung from her hat brim, and Dosha tried to place her, just as Madame de Brisac inclined her head. Then the blond beauty's attendant swain

3—Ains.

hove into view, and Dosha found herself gazing into her husband's startled eyes.

This was the first time she had actually encountered him in the company of Natalie Dupres, and it gave her a queer sensation of utter repulsion. Yet both the countess and her brother were more perturbed by the incident than she. Allerton scowled darkly at Alec, who was seating the comedienne at an adjacent table. And when Varesco, with perhaps too nonchalant an air, strolled over to them, he was barely courteous.

"An unexpected pleasure, *carissima*," he told his wife suavely, after greeting the others.

Dosha shrugged indifferently. Yet she was thankful that he kept up an outward show of domestic felicity. She chatted of inconsequential matters while he stood there. But Varesco, betraying a certain ulterior meaning in his long dark eyes, soon played the contemplated card that had brought him to their table.

"I take it that we cannot hope you and Madame de Brisac will linger in Paris after the hot weather sets in, Allerton. And your departure will mean a void for my wife."

He smiled idly at Allerton. There was some secret portent in the casual words, Dosha, who knew every expression, every tone of Alec's, realized. Was this the reason he had smiled so curiously during the past weeks when she had mentioned Allerton or his sister? Was it possible that he was jealous, unwilling for her to have any masculine friendships in the face of his own infidelity?

Madame de Brisac regarded the tip of her exotic cigarette minutely.

"We are not going to Deauville this season," Allerton remarked. "It gets rather monotonous, in time. I have a better plan."

Nella de Brisac's sallow little face was a mask.

"My most recent acquisition," Allerton continued, "is a yacht. And a lazy trip through the Mediterranean has always held out lure for me. If I can get the captain I want we'll try that." He seemed suddenly obsessed by a new idea. "Here's a notion! Why can't we get up a party, Nella, with Monsieur and Madame Varesco as the drawing cards? Could you escape your engagements?" he asked Alec.

The countess lowered discreet eyes. This yachting party had been planned for months, and as the brief invitation list now stood—

"So many people dislike the sea," she murmured. "Perhaps Monsieur Varesco, a native of the hills, shares that aversion."

Varesco had his cue, but to Dosha's amazement he ignored it deliberately.

"Neither concert engagements nor a tendency to *mal de mer* are my misfortune," he told them gayly. "Nothing could give me more pleasure than such a trip!"

Dosha interposed abruptly.

"But Alec, you have already engaged yourself!"

"Varesco can play when and where he chooses," he reminded her.

"And I, madame, may return to America for a few months." She untruthfully reassured Nella de Brisac, with a fleet smile. "But if I do not go, as Alec says, nothing could please us more."

Quite deftly she closed the subject, so that Alec had to leave them, return to his impatient companion.

For days—days in which she saw little of her husband—Dosha wondered at two things: at his sudden change of attitude, his eager acquiescence to the suggestion of the man, whom, five minutes before, he had been subtly accusing of too close companionship with his wife; and at her own inexplicable feeling of aversion to the acceptance of the invitation. Her reluctance might have

been occasioned by the countess' reluctance, which had showed itself so plainly for a brief moment. But she did not think that was it. After all, it was Allerton's yacht, Allerton's invitation. And Nella de Brisac cared for her. That she knew. She knew also why the countess had hesitated when her brother had so eagerly extended the invitation.

Dosha, sitting alone that afternoon in the furnished flat they had taken, smiled gently. Madame de Brisac feared some sentimental interlude between Ross and herself. But that, Dosha insisted to herself, was the last thing in the world the countess had to fear. She, Dosha, was through with men.

It occurred to her that it was somewhat tragic that a young and beautiful woman of twenty-one should be doomed to a life remote, aloof, from the human lot. But it was so. Alec and life had quenched to blackened ash the fire and flame of her youth, had turned to stone her hitherto gay young heart. She seemed to have lost all capacity for emotion. Broodingly she wondered if the blow Alec, her once beloved, had struck her, had even killed her capacity for pain. For since that sharp, unbearable pang, she had, she thought, felt nothing. She smiled out at the opalescent sky. Did he think that he was hurting her, punishing her for her coldness, by his affair with the blond actress?

Two days after that hour of brooding she discovered that her capacity for pain, for anguish unutterable, was untapped.

She and Alec, exquisitely polite, exquisitely interested in each other in public, as they always were, were the center of attraction in Madame de Brisac's stall at the races. Her women guests paid a sort of fluttering homage to the virtuoso, looking like June butterflies in their pale linens, their sheer organdies. And Dosha held court among the men.

She felt singularly gay and carefree that afternoon, full of a *joie de vivre* which the excitement of the races roused in her, that Allerton had helped to foster.

She leaned over the edge of their box. She could see him now, a few yards away, at the starting ribbon. His light gray linen riding clothes distinguished him among the gayly caparisoned jockeys, who sat wheeling their mounts no more lightly, no more gracefully than he. As if he felt her gaze upon him he turned, and cantered up.

"If you but knew it, I'm wearing your colors," he told her, his bare, crisply fair head catching goldish gleams of light in the sunshine. He held aloft his cap, and she saw it was the blue of her gown. "If I were a knight of old you would toss me a guerdon for good fortune!"

With a mock sigh she considered her corsage of white gardenias, disengaged a single blossom from its nest of ribbon and foliage, dropped it over the barrier between them.

He caught it easily, carried it to his lips with a gesture which held more than gallantry, and fastened it in his cap.

"As a talisman, I mistrust its potency," said Dosha softly, her dark eyes inscrutably shadowed. Could anything of hers bring good fortune with it, she wondered?

"And I'm equally sure that it will give me luck," he returned. A bell rang. "Au revoir!" He cantered back to the starting point, reined in his nervous, eager mare.

All glasses were leveled upon the competing horses, bets were being taken on the respective points of each mount. And then, for the third time, the signal sounded. The ribbon was cut. They were off.

Perhaps nothing in the world is quite as absorbedly thrilling as a horse race. The very beauty of the beasts, their

heaving satin bodies, trembling with eagerness to make the goal, give it a quality that is utterly lacking on the motor racetrack. No machine forged by other machines, and the mind of man, however powerful in its purring speed, can equal a spirited piece of horseflesh, bred from generations of the best.

Their glossy bodies, foam-flecked, their proud, straining necks, and flying feet, all merged into a centaurlike, mythical whole with the perfect riders, embody the spirit of the race as a low-slung car of tin and iron can never do.

Dosha, clutching her glasses madly, leveled them upon that black mare, its gray-clad rider. The time seemed endless, yet magically brief before the first of the hurdles was reached, vaulted, and the race continued.

The first half of the bend was made. Two more hurdles. The last bar was almost under Madame de Brisac's box. The race was almost won. On and on they came, the magnificent black horse still in the lead. She could distinguish the faces of the riders now, strained, intent, burned until they looked as if they were not human, but cast in bronze.

Her rose-red lips parted in a little smile. Now she could distinguish the waxy flower in Allerton's cap, which her hand had flung him.

And then, just as horse and rider, still in the lead, reached the last hurdle, the smile was frozen on her face. How it happened she did not know. The great black horse did not clear the bar, but plunged forward, all rearing, snorting head and frantic feet, rolled headlong in the dust. His rider was flung ten yards and lay white and still in the very path of the other panic-stricken mounts.

Dosha never knew that she cried out his name. It had never passed her lips before. Frantically she pushed past her terrified companions, past the track attendant at the little door beneath the wooden flight. She sped to where he

lay, her winged feet flashing through the dust of the track.

Others had reached him first, of course, but it was she who knelt at his side, stanched, with her handkerchief, the flow of blood from his left temple. His right arm was twisted under him grotesquely. He came back slowly to consciousness and with a sigh opened his eyes.

Two men came bearing a stretcher while Nella de Brisac and her guests stood helplessly by. But Ross did not turn to his sister to reassure her with a word. His gray eyes were fixed wonderingly upon Dosha's colorless face, so close to his. A smile twitched his pale lips. Stiffly he raised his uninjured arm, reached for her slim, cold hand, whose touch seemed to heal the throbbing wound in his head, clasped it.

"My dear," he whispered.

The sweetest little smile made Dosha's mouth very tender.

The look they exchanged so intently, so rapturously, did not pass unseen. Ross was lifted carefully to the stretcher, borne to a near-by tent, while his distracted sister followed. And Dosha, left standing there in the hot sunlight, which limned her pallor, her fright, the blood-stained handkerchief in her hand, found Alec beside her, his arm through hers.

He, too, was very pale. His mouth smiled, but mirthlessly. It was only the lift of his upper lip, showing his white teeth, that gave a first impression of gayety. His eyes, close-lidded, suggested the sinister as they bored into hers.

But Dosha, a little dazed, curiously remote from Alec and all the rest of the world, in this mantle of fear that shrouded her, only walked back with him to the group which awaited them. She did not hear the hurried chatter, the confused and varied versions of the accident. It seemed an endless space before the surgeon appeared.

"Monsieur Allerton's accident is not serious," he informed them debonairly. "A fractured arm, a wound on the temple. If that terrified mare's flying hoof had struck a fraction of an inch to the left—" He shrugged. "But as it is—"

It was as if breath came back into Dosha's body, as if her veins flowed with blood again. Alec felt her relax, saw faint color creep back into her white cheeks. He spoke ironically under his breath.

"One would think that you, not our host, had been struck the perilous blow, *ma p'tite!* Console yourself; Monsieur Allerton cannot but recover, with so lovely an intercessor praying for him!"

She stared at him, shrank back from the mocking revelation in his eyes, a revelation she had not dared to face even with Ross' whispered endearment beating in her brain, his dear hand clinging helplessly to hers.

"But for your own sake, *ma belle*, conceal the depths of your gratitude and your regard for this charming American, who should not, by the way, ride a nervous mount."

He turned away, leaving the bright stretch of track and field a sun-drenched blur to her vision.

CHAPTER VII.

With only the prompting of her tender heart, Nella de Brisac kept Dosha in touch with the invalid's daily improvement until, one bright afternoon when she went to the Hôtel de Brisac to have tea with her friend, the manservant admitted her into the library, and she found there, not Nella, in one of her exotic house gowns, but Allerton himself, thinner than usual and very pale, with his arm folded across his breast in a sling.

Dosha, a figure of light itself in her pale-yellow frock and hat, which seemed to shed sunbeams in the dark, paneled

room, paused an instant, torn between a desire for flight and an intense longing to walk into the room, into his arms, smiling, her lips raised to his.

She dismissed both mad impulses, came toward him with a cordial, outstretched hand.

"How nice to see you downstairs again!"

"How nice to be here, rather. The past weeks have not been winged, I assure you!"

She made him go back to the chaise longue, which had been brought in from Nella's breakfast room.

"To be ill and confined to one's room makes the hours all laggard," she pretended to agree a little stiffly.

His lips curved in a little smile.

"That wasn't quite what I meant. I was referring to the void they have been—without you."

He leaned forward, his free hand reaching for hers.

"Why do you pretend that you don't understand me, my dear?"

She sprang up, went to the carved bookshelves, with their burden of beautifully bound volumes. Was Nella a party to this arrangement?

"Why do you make me put into words the thing I shall have to spend the rest of my life forgetting?" she asked him so softly that he could barely hear her.

"Dosha, my dear love—for you are that—is it possible that you do understand, do care as I do?"

The words tumbled swiftly from his eager lips. He rose, but she retreated across the room.

"Would I have felt the terror of death itself that day when your horse missed the bar, fell, if you hadn't been very dear to me?" she asked humbly. "How curious, Ross, that in all these weeks and months I never guessed why I turned to you instinctively, blindly, in each crisis."

"I knew you were the one woman in

the world that first night at the café. When you looked at me, my dear, and beckoned me to your table—I was sick with terror myself when you told me who you were. I was so doggedly sure that there was no such person."

He laughed happily.

"Come to me, Dosha. Why do you keep that senseless distance from me?"

Sad-eyed, she touched the polished surface of the table.

"Because there's more than this—there's the unsurmountable between us, my very dear! I'm Alec's wife. Have you forgotten that?"

"Do you think I could forget it, loving you as I do? But Dosha—"

He paused. For a man of principle, of delicacy, his position was awkward in the extreme. Varesco's wife had just told him, Ross Allerton, that she loved him. That very advantage he had over her husband, despicable creature that he was, made it difficult for him to use his pleas. But he was forgetting the other man's own infidelity.

"You must get a divorce."

"I wonder—" She paused. Would Alec, the jealous, the passionately vindictive man she had come to know, ever give her freedom? She shook the thought from her. He would; he must. She would force him to do it. He had no right to shackle her life to his.

"Do you know what I am?" she asked pitifully. "A creature of mad impulses, of a thousand unhappy traits. My heredity is no small thing, to be ignored, forgotten. Alec once said that it would shape my destiny. It has, to my great sorrow."

She had come to stand beside him now, and he overcame the impulse to take her in his arms, kiss her desirable lips. Instead, he raised both her small gloved hands to his cheek.

"I only know that you are the most lovely thing God ever made, that you are going to be my wife." He released her as his sister's step sounded on the

stair. "May I tell her, Dosha? She loves you, too."

"No! No!" Some sane and cautious instinct made her seal his lips.

And when Nella, who had given them this half hour of her own accord, came into the dark room she could only guess at what had occurred.

Dosha did not stay long. She was conscience-stricken at the older woman's sweetness. Would the Comtesse de Brisac be as affectionate, as kind, when she knew that her brother meant later to marry this neglected wife of the gypsy violinist? But she was too exquisitely happy to let any such doubts and shadows mar the perfect bloom of her joy. So, knowing well that it had a fragility that would not withstand the cold touch of reality, she kept it close and safe.

Before she left Ross spoke of the Mediterranean trip.

"This upset of mine hastens our sail. The doctor says I need sea air, change, and all the rest of it. So we can start at any time. Say you'll come!"

His gray eyes were compelling.

Nella shot a quick, triumphant glance at him, and spoke.

"It's to be a small party. The only people we've asked so far are Natalie Dupres, a nice young Englishman named Burrell, the Averils, and you and Monsieur Varesco!"

Dosha should not be left in ignorance of the Dupres woman's presence on the yacht. She had been asked months before, and the invitation could not, obviously, be rescinded. Dosha only smiled. It occurred to her that there was the bare possibility of Alec's proving untrue to form, and becoming genuinely enamored with the little actress, against the romantic background of the Mediterranean islands, the Cyprian winds and waters.

"My husband is very anxious to go," she said simply. "I think it will be possible."

She walked home to the old-fashioned brick dwelling, not far from the Bois, in which she and Alec had a month before taken a spacious furnished apartment, was admitted by the concierge who, as always, replied to her stereotyped question about mail with a smiling nod of the head.

Alec had come in early, was pacing the floor of the little salon in his restless way, waiting for her. It happened that they were going somewhere together that night.

"Where have you been?" he asked.

Dosha drew off her gloves slowly.

"Having tea with Madame de Brisac."

How much longer would this unreal phase of her life last, she wondered, glancing idly about the room.

Varesco swung about sulkily.

"And that brother of hers—"

She did not answer him; but went to the little Louis mirror, removed her hat, twisting her dark head this way and that as she touched up the sleekness of her coiffure.

Varesco flung the book he was holding upon the floor in a pettish rage.

"Answer me!" he demanded irritably.

"He was there," she told him in level tones.

Something must have happened that day to put him in a fury, for he gave vent to it suddenly.

"Of course he was there! Otherwise you would not have gone. You little fool—do you think for one instant that your innocent airs blind me? You love the fellow!" He caught her shoulders cruelly. "Bah, what you see in him! I am forgetting his millions, though! But listen to me. You shall not accept one penny from him, one gift of his choosing! I, your husband, forbid it!"

Dosha looked at him contemptuously.

"You are not on the stage, Alec. And if you were, this would not be drama, but burlesque. For your own sake as well as mine, try to restrain yourself. I have never lied to you; I

shall not lie to you now." She drew a deep breath, lifted her proud head. "I do love Ross Allerton. And he—loves me. Now you know all that there is to know."

He laughed cynically at that. She dropped into a chair, gazed at him over her linked hands.

"You can't understand that sort of love, can you? Well, it happens to exist. And as long as I am your wife, though it is only a slight tie that is holding us together, I shall be nothing to him but the merest friend."

Alec raised his cruel upper lip, about to speak. But Dosha continued.

"To abandon the hypothetical—" She moved impatiently. "We have come to the end, Alec. Our marriage has not only been a mistake, but a tragedy. I do not blame you for that. You are the sort of person you are, utterly apart from the ordinary run of men, and not to be judged by their standards, I suppose. I have never judged you. Now, all I ask is—my freedom! It should be very simple; this is the city of easy divorce. Heaven knows you've given me cause enough."

"Divorce!" He echoed the word.

The silken tone of his voice gave way to something thick and horrible; his pale face was livid, twitching, as his clenched fist came down on the mantel with a blow that shattered a tiny, cloisonné vase.

"You would go before a judge, have our marriage pronounced null and void, become the bride of this self-satisfied fool—and Varesco would be forgotten. Do you think I give up my possessions so easily, Dosha? A thousand times no!"

She was incredulous.

"You mean—you'll keep me, not loving me, after treating me as you have?"

"You tell me I do not love you? Have I not implored you to forget all that has happened? Have I not lavished everything upon you?" he

stormed. "Because of that one quarrel, that thoughtless blow, you have treated me like an underling, spurned me with your foot! And I, fawning like a dog for your kindness, have endured it. But this is too much—too much!" he ranted.

He dashed his hands to his eyes, overcome by a horrible sort of grief that, instead of moving her, chilled her.

"You can tell me all this, in the face of your affair with Natalie Dupres?"

The gesture of his shoulders called upon Heaven to witness the lack of reason in the question.

"I have told you I did not love her. She amuses me, flatters me, makes me forget you, for a few brief hours. Dosha, beloved one, come back to me!"

She shrank from him.

"Never! Never! Release me, Alec, if you have any love for me, pity for me, in your heart!"

"So that you will be free to go to him? No!"

His whispered denial impressed upon her, as his storming could never do, the obdurate steadfastness of his will. And then, in her blind misery, she remembered what Paul Vallon, the crippled poet who had passed out of their swiftly moving life, had told her. He was not earthbound by a heart, that, as the years go by, becomes heavy with long-stored sorrow. Not he! He knew passions and desires, joys and torments, but neither tenderness nor pity. It was useless to appeal to the quality he did not have.

"Freedom is my right," she told him. "I shall fight for it, Alec."

His frenzy had worn itself out. But the look in his eyes, the steely grip of his hands, was more impelling.

"I promise you, Dosha—and I, too, keep my word—that if I cannot have you, no other man shall. You know me for an unyielding, a conscienceless creature, yes? I tell you I will kill the man who takes you from me! Now, if you think that an idle threat, go to

him. I do not bid you stay! Perhaps the end of all things would ease this torment here."

He touched his breast, flung himself into a chair, hiding his bitter face.

For a long time she stood before the open window, gazing blindly down upon the city. Each roof housed some unhappy soul, she supposed. Among those diminutive pedestrians—they looked like insects from her high windows—must be many embittered and sorrowful ones, but none as sorrowful, she thought, as she.

Life, that had been a beautiful, a glowing thing, so short a time ago, was become a thing of dust and decay. And while it crumbled about her in all its ugliness she must live on.

The lovely primrose tints of the sky faded, darkened. The first sheer veils of night fell like mist. Dosha, a figure of despair, stood bleakly etched against the violet horizon. At last a bell rang, shrilly, jerkily.

It was Alec who lifted the receiver from the hook, spoke. He turned to Dosha, guarding the mouthpiece with the palm of his hand.

"It is your Madame de Brisac about this yachting trip. We start in three days."

She looked at him, aghast.

"Start in three days! Do you think I would go now? Alec, I can't! Even you could not ask that of me!"

"I demand it of you," he said sulkily. "Your staying home might look rather strange, for I intend to go. And I choose to have you go, Dosha!" She saw a sardonic gleam in his eyes that she hated. "You see, I trust you, *ma belle!*"

She tried to reach the telephone, to snatch it out of his hand. But he caught it up, spoke swiftly, smoothly.

"Madame Varesco is engaged just now. We sail on the third, then. A delightful day to look forward to, madame! A thousand thanks!"

Her arms dropped to her side in a gesture of submission. She could not conquer destiny.

CHAPTER VIII.

A costly steam yacht is the most luxurious thing in the world as far as comfort, perfect appointments, and a sense of gratified ease are concerned. Allerton's boat, the *Gull*, was small, but perfect in every detail. Under moderately propitious circumstances, a well-chosen group of people could not help but be contented on board of her.

But beneath the apparent idle gayety of Nella de Brisac's party lay an element of suspense, of something that Mary Averil called "destined doom," one night when she had stopped in her husband's cabin for a cigarette while he dressed for dinner.

Owen Averil was a rich man and the son of a richer man, a mining engineer by choice, and an eminently practical person. He was an amusing contrast to Leonard Burrell, who went in for the exotic.

At his wife's comment he laughed now.

"My dear girl, it's rather an ordinary situation, I should say. Old Ross is head over heels in love with Varesco's wife, and she isn't in love with him. Which is rather a shame, as her own husband is raising the devil with that green-eyed Parisienne."

Mary Averil smiled in a superior way, sniffing at the pleasantly aromatic scent of his shaving lotion.

"I like bay rum," she said irrelevantly. Then, "You're a half wit, Owen, if you haven't seen that Madame Varesco is mad about Ross. Watch her when he's about. That's what makes the thing really intriguing. She isn't holding off on Nella's account, for Nella is a true Frenchwoman as far as these *affaires de cœur* are concerned."

By which it may be seen that the

house of Varesco was the main topic of interest on board the *Gull*. Dosha loathed that. But then, she hated the glamorous Beauty that surrounded them, the happy idle days spent on deck, the hideous pretense of joy that must be maintained at all costs.

A thousand times a day she wished she had defied Alec, refused to come. But each time she made the despairing wish she knew in her heart that she could not have stayed away from the man she loved. Not when Alec, with all his wild moods, was to be among his companions!

She was always afraid. And because of that fear, she told Ross that she could never leave Alec, marry him, on account of the wild strain in her blood.

It took a long, a tragic scene to convince him of her unyielding will, her fixed determination. But at last she did. At the cost of anguished hours to them both, sleepless nights for her.

And Alec? Being Alec, he devoted himself recklessly to the blond actress until even Len Burrell fixed his glass in his eye and, staring after the eternally paired two, remarked to the empty chair beside him that it was a damned shame.

Nella, at once grieved and grateful when her brother told her that there was no hope of future happiness with Dosha, was hardly enjoying the voyage, blissful as the weather continued to be. There was too strong an undercurrent of something almost sinister.

But the hot, blue-porcelain days slipped by, and the beautiful yacht slid along through quiet waters, touching now and then at queer ports, redolent of semitropic fruits, olives from Spain, and sweet white wines from inland Italy.

And then, as if it were all part of some foreordained plan of a giant mind, which loved to loose strife and peril among the pawns, the gay and tragic voyage came to an end.

But much happened before that. Curiously enough, it was simple, honest Mary Averil who brought the climax upon them all. One vivid day she had said to her husband, as they lay out on deck:

"He's a Don Juan, Owen. I don't think for a moment that he's in love with Natalie Dupres. He's simply ruthless, ready for any feminine diversion! It would be rather good fun to see if I couldn't bring him to heel."

Her husband surveyed her amusedly. She was good-looking, in freshly-colored fashion, typically English.

"You probably could, if that flatters your vanity, which it shouldn't."

She considered a stately cloth-of-silver gown that she had been rather dubious about wearing, and decided to suppress her English distaste for the *outré*. She appeared that night, late, looking like a goddess carved in precious metal. Dosha marveled that she had ever thought Mrs. Averil plain. But then, she had never worn that taffy-colored hair so that it resembled anything but a rather clumsy, tannish knot. She glanced at Alec, who leaned over Mademoiselle Dupres as she played gay little French songs. She had fancied for the past few days that in inverse ratio, as the comedienne's infatuation grew more obvious, more intense, Alec's was decreasing. Not that he had ever been genuinely in love with her. But whatever hold she had had upon him was, she felt sure, slackening.

Natalie was speaking. He left her, the phrase on her lips, to finish the neglected little song, strolled to meet Mary Averil.

"Hebe!"

Leonard Burrell, who was handing Nella de Brisac her cocktail, drawled softly:

"The queen is dead. Long live the next queen!"

Scornful, Dosha had shielded herself from Allerton's quiet, untiring pursuit

with Owen Averil, who now proved a broken reed. For he excused himself as Ross came up and usurped his place.

"Why must you always evade me, Dosha?"

"I have told you why!"

He smiled at her gravely.

"You might at least keep up appearances, my dear. Every one wonders why you use me so badly. Come out on deck for a few minutes, like a dear girl."

Laughingly he drew her out of her chair, toward the door. And meekly she acquiesced. She preceded him up the short flight. In the isolated security of the upper deck they were alone. But he did not attempt to take with a caress the citadel he could not take by reason of their acknowledged love for each other.

"Are you still deaf to the entreaties of common sense—and to all of mine?" he inquired of her.

The old struggle began all over again. By now Dosha had almost come to a sort of fanatic belief in her own arguments. She was fervent, absolute, as she denied herself and him all hope.

"There's a sort of hideous doom attached to my race, Ross. I see it now so plainly. Tragedy has marked us since that first poor, desperate Dosha came to the Rest. Her life—Heaven only knows what it was after she left her husband's house, her little son!—was doomed. My father must have been a wretched man. There is some old story about the woman he really loved, and did not marry, having given him up because of his wild living. My mother he never loved. It was best for them both that he was brought home, hideously hurt, before I was born, and that he died in a few days. I must finish the old legend—and finish it alone, my very dear!"

"Tied to this husband of yours?"

She shook her head.

"This cannot go on. I shall leave

him, support myself in some fashion. But the husband, remember, that I married on the eve of my wedding to a kind, just man—it was the wild, the tameless, rebel Dosha who listened to his love-making, who fled with him. That Dosha can never be subdued I'm afraid. She's the stronger, Ross." She looked mistily out to sea. "Supposing fate was kind"—her voice trembled—"and I married you. Who knows but that in a few years this wild blood of mine would drive me on to further folly? I might be driven to anything!" she ended desperately, and shuddered at the thought.

"I'd risk it, dearest one." He laughed at her very tenderly. "Foolish little girl, don't you realize that you're a thoroughbred? Against that single fusion of what you call your 'wild blood' is pitted generations of breeding, of ancient stock. In the final analysis, Dosha, that is uppermost."

"If I could believe it!" she murmured. "We must go down."

That night the heat was stifling. It was too warm to dance, even to play bridge or mah jong. Nella's guests amused themselves idly on deck or in the main cabin.

Dosha watched the little three-cornered drama that Mary Averil had staged with her silver gown, her slow smile. All through dinner she had retained Varesco's absorbed attention, and now Natalie Dupres, her little face at once hard and pitiful, was trying to beguile him back to her with her beautiful voice, raised in snatches of song. But she had sung to him for three months now. It was time for her to join the shades of her predecessors. Dosha thought idly of La Gayos, whom he had forgotten as if she had never existed.

Presently she sent Burrell off to his hostess, went to her room.

The last thing she saw was Natalie, her blond head lifted alluringly.

And though she sang a plaintive little chanson he loved, and though Mary had gone to take a hand at bridge, he did not turn from his book of prints.

*"La vie est vain,
Un peu d'amour,
Un peu de haine,
Et puis—bon jour!"*

*"La vie est brève
Un peu d'espoir,
Un peu de rêve,
Et puis—bon soir!"*

The oldest, most pitiful refrain in the world, thought Dosha, as she left them together. Futile act! It was not until she entered her own small cabin that she realized that she was weeping—weeping, for herself or the woman to whom she had so willingly relinquished her husband? For all women who had ever loved him, she told herself; for the blind, pitiful world!

The amazing weather continued throughout the next day without relief. But Varesco, in whom some strain of Southern blood responded with vitality to intense heat, lounged on deck or played quoits with beautiful, cool Mary, who piqued him with her indifference. The little comedienne was pale, heavy-eyed. Despair shadowed her.

"The little fool loves him!" said Nella unsympathetically to her favorite guest.

Dosha looked after her, nodded.

"Be kind, Nella. Speak to your nice Mrs. Averil. She hasn't fallen victim to Alec's charms. And it's so cruel of her to amuse herself at that poor creature's expense!"

"My dear, quixotic child! Have you forgotten how deliberately Natalie Dupres laid her snares for him?"

"I can't help it. *She* loves him, Nella," spoke Dosha knowingly.

As if nature herself wanted to take a hand in the brewing catastrophe, toward sunset the glazed sky and the mirroring

waters took on a curious change. It was as if an unseen shadow hovered behind the heavens, waiting to pounce. And the sea lay motionless, unstirred by wind or wave, waiting, apparently, too.

"It looks like a storm," Allerton admitted. "Captain MacPierson thinks we're in for a bad squall within a few hours. I hope none of you are accustomed to take to your berths at the first roll, for the Mediterranean storms can be fairly violent at this time of year."

Dosha, gazing out to sea, felt a premonitory thrill of peril. She wanted the tang of danger, of imminent disaster. The wrath of the elements, the fury of wind and wave and driving rain, lit by streaks of livid light, might give her surcease from the tempest that surged within her.

There was no sunset that night. By seven o'clock they were enveloped in an angry, yellowish dusk, and the west was shrouded with a solitary black cloud.

They were at dinner when the storm broke, and frightened servants dropped everything to dash to close the portholes. Above them the thud of the water had a menacing roar. Heavy footsteps could be heard; the bellow of shouted orders.

Dosha loved it, thrilled to it in every fiber, until, when only she and Alec and Allerton were left in the green-and-white saloon—the others, unable to withstand the toss and pitch of the boat, had sought their cabins—the ruddy captain came below, touched his braided cap.

"Sorry, sir, but we're one man short. Macklin was knocked to the deck by a heading wave and his shoulder's fractured. Can you give us a hand?"

"Of course." Ross stripped off his dinner coat, donned the dripping sou'wester the captain handed him. "Didn't we just pass the westerly coast of Sardinia? We're weaving in and out

of her small islands. Can't we get to port?"

The captain shook his head.

"Not possible, sir. I couldn't attempt it in a sea like this. There's a bad stretch of shoals just ahead of us, as it is."

Dosha followed them out, was halted at the door by Varesco.

"Dosha!" he pleaded.

She waited.

"In this possible danger have you no word for me? I love you!"

His caressing voice left her cold.

"You're contemptible, Alec. Let me pass!"

He took her hands, drew them to his heart. And before she could tear herself away from him, his lips were on hers. Faint with a horror she did not know she could feel toward the man she had once loved, she wrenched herself away from him. Then she saw they were not alone. Lurching in the doorway with each rise and dip of the boat stood Natalie Dupres, watching them. Dosha fled, was halted in the corridor outside the salon by a grim procession.

Two of the deckhands were bearing the limp, drenched form of one of the crew to the warmth of the galley.

And while she waited there, wondering what was happening above her head on the unprotected deck, the hysterical voice of Natalie Dupres beat upon her ears.

"If you have pity, Alec, do not leave me now! I am afraid! *Mon dieu*, how I am afraid! The noise of the storm, the shouts of the men—they sound like doom!"

Alec and pity! But, while he disengaged her clinging hands, he reassured the terror-stricken girl.

"Go down to the smoking cabin; that's directly astern, and you will find the floor more stable. It will be quieter, too. Yes, yes, I'll join you there presently, little idiot!"

Dosha crept along the uncertain, narrow way to her cabin, was flung almost to her knees as she entered, closed the door. She heard Alec pass, enter his own room. She did not hear him come out again.

Half an hour later, when the storm was at its height, and Madame de Brisac's terrified maid had knocked to inquire if she were frightened, and to ask her to join Madame le Comtesse, who was ill, she remembered the pallid, strained countenance of the little actress, heard her pitiful pleas to Alec, beseeching him not to leave her.

The girl must now be alone there, in the small, remote cabin to which he had sent her, promising to follow. Dosha, who did not know fear of physical danger, shivered. Terror had looked so starkly out of those gold-green eyes.

She rose, made her way to the door, passed down the corridor. It was almost impossible to descend the short flight of steps. She found the place of the rendezvous, listened intently. The sound of tumultuous sobbing reached her ears. She entered the little red room.

Natalie, her long fair hair disheveled, knelt beside a leather chair, weeping hysterically. At the sound of the opened door, just audible above the labored throb of the engines, she raised her pretty, pale face, marked now by grief.

"You, madame?"

Dosha nodded.

"I knew you were alone, frightened."

Myriad emotions betrayed themselves in flight across the pretty, tear-sodden features.

"Because I was frightened, alone, so? Not because you overheard your husband promise to meet me here, oh, no!"

She was as dangerous as a little wounded animal at bay.

Dosha smiled.

"Would I have taken exception to *this* rendezvous, mademoiselle, when I

have been complaisant this long? Hardly."

But the girl, desperate, miserable, frightened, was in no mood to listen to reason.

"Say what you have come to say, madame. I shall not mind. And I—I will tell you what he has feared to tell. It is quite true that we love each other, are everything to each other. *Mon dicu!*" he shrieked. "This storm!"

What had Alec told her? Dosha spoke very gently.

"You love my husband, mademoiselle?"

"More than anything in life! And he—" She gave herself up to tumultuous sobbing.

"Is incapable of even understanding a love like that!"

The comedienne faced her fiercely.

"That is not true! I am to him what no other woman has ever been, ever could be! This Mrs. Averil, does she think she can take him from me? Bah! He is mine. Even to you I can say it with truth. If it were not for you, who hold him bound to you—"

This was too much for Dosha. She, who could not endure to give pain, laughed outright.

"Do you really believe that? If you do, mademoiselle, it is my duty to enlighten you. My husband is a heartless and a conscienceless man. You think he loves you. I tell you he is incapable of love! I, his wife, am the one woman who has withstood him. And I am the one woman he professes to hold in the balance against all others. I hate him! And he will not let me go!"

The other woman stared at her incredulously.

"It's a lie!" she pronounced in trembling tones. "You're trying to kill my faith in him!"

"I am trying to keep him from breaking your heart. Have you not seen that he is ready to leave you at a glance from another woman?"

"It was better that we should not appear inseparable," the little blond pleaded in extenuation.

She was still trying to defend him to herself, and to his wife.

Dosha flung up her expressive hands.

"I see that you will believe nothing that I say. I can only prove his infidelity to us both by his presence. Perhaps, after all, he will come."

The heavy glass of the porthole presented only black water, that dashed thunderingly against the glass, made it seem a frail thing between them and the peril outside.

Yet they both heard outside the uncertain step of the man they awaited. He too was pale with the stress of the storm, and his wet dinner coat and crumpled shirt front showed that he had been up on deck. His astonishment at sight of his wife was profound.

"Why are you here, Dosha *mia*?"

"To disillusion this girl, who thinks that you love her and her alone."

Varesco tried to laugh at the gravity of Dosha's tone, nonchalantly took out a pack of thoroughly drenched cigarettes.

"What a scene! I should not have believed it of you, on my word!" He eyed them both uncertainly, felt behind him for the doorknob. "As I am doubtless the object of your discussion—hadn't I better go?"

"Tell me that what she says is not true! Tell me that you love me, *mon ami!*" pleaded the distraught actress.

Dosha's short upper lip curled in contempt as the other woman caught his arm, pressed her cheek against it.

"Tell her courageously that it is I whom you love!"

"Tell her if you can," Dosha echoed softly. "She thinks, Alec, that I hold you bound to me against your will; that I will not free you to go to her!" She covered her face with her hands, and there was no sound in the room but the slow, desperate beat of the en-

gines below them. "So you will not tell her, and she will not believe it from my lips! Ah, well!"

Heartsick, revolted by all the pitiable, ugly passions that filled the small cabin, she turned blindly to the door.

"You shall not go!"

Like a pale-haired fury the Frenchwoman flung herself against the door, barred the way with outstretched arms.

Dosha turned mutely to her husband. He could not force her to endure another scene. But Mademoiselle Dupres silenced him with shrill, unlovely speech.

"You shall not leave before you hear him! Then you will be humbled, as you have humbled me with your kindness! Bah! I loathe such impulses!"

Her swift hand wrenched the key in the lock of the heavy door, and she sped with it to the porthole, which, barely unfastened, swung back before the swirling waters that flooded into the room. Before Alec could reach her side the key was flung out into the night.

Drenched with the tide she had loosed, she stumbled back with a scream of terror as the man sprang at the single barrier between them and the wild dark water, forced it shut. But she did not scream at the rush of wind, at the convex green wave that they had glimpsed in its menacing onslaught. She screamed at a sudden grinding crash that flung them all against the opposite wall, that made the yacht tremble from stern to keel, seem slowly to settle, as if it were some living creature, sinking into death. A terrible silence hung over them, a silence that was immediately broken by a dull roar, the roar of many waters.

"The engines—they have stopped!" gasped Alec.

"We've struck something," whispered Dosha.

Already the floor was beginning to slant perceptibly.

"And we are caught, caught!" the man snarled. "You fool—you fool—you've trapped us all!"

He turned upon the shrinking, cowering form of Natalie Dupres, cursed her with terrible oaths. And, moaning horribly, she clung to his knees. He flung her from him, beat senselessly upon the door.

"They can't hear us," Dosha told him quietly. "Listen!"

Faint, hoarse cries, the thump of running feet, a confusion unimaginable sounded from some dim and distant place. Something ice cold struck her ankles. She saw that two inches of water had crept in under the door. Even if it were not locked, imprisoning them, it was doubtful whether they could make the staircase. For the boat was sinking, stern first.

"You might wrench up that chair, try to break down the door," she told him.

Natalie dragged at the chair on its pivot like the desperate thing she was. Varesco managed to rip the heavy thing from its moorings, crash it against the panels. Once, twice, a third time he flung all his strength against that grimly substantial barrier between them and safety while the comedienne's hoarse screams filled the cabin. And then both panels gave way, only to fall back before the sluice of water that was filling the hold, sinking the ship.

"By the grace of *le bon dieu*," he muttered, and held out his arms to Dosha. "Put your arms about my neck, *ma belle*—we can but attempt to make the stairway, and the lifeboats."

Natalie's thin scream rose above the rush of the waters, that were knee deep now.

"Alec," she begged piteously. "Save me, for the love of God. I dare not die!"

He would have struck her if Dosha had not come between them.

"Forget me," she told him steadily.

"Save this poor creature, if it is the last thing you do. You owe her that."

"But you—you!"

"I can take care of myself. The waters are rising, Alec. Take her before it is too late."

In that last dark hour he bowed before the stronger will. And together, he and the half fainting woman reached the door. He paused once more.

"Dosha—are you not afraid?"

"Of death?" She shook her head. "Go quickly."

They had struggled through the corridor by now, must have made the way to the stairs. The water had crept up to her breast, and she still stood there, calm as some graven image, waiting, waiting. Her knees were giving way from a sickly, desperate fear of that last anguished struggle. She had lied. It was hard to die, when youth and beauty and love were waiting. And yet, death, in the present instance, might be very kind.

It was an eternity before the water reached her chin. With the instinct of self-preservation she drew herself upon the secretary that was built into the wall. That would give her ten minutes' stay, at least.

She had not screamed once, she realized with a sort of dim pride. There was a roaring in her ears. Stalwart blows sounded above her. They had not all left the ship then. But still she did not call out for aid. With death so near why struggle back to the sad portion of life? Better slip down from her strained perch, down, down, down—

Something fell heavily, and she cried out at the ragged gash in the ceiling above her head. That sound of blows had meant something, then. And, as a desperately wielded ax crashed through the ceiling, making an opening large enough for a man's body to slip through, the lights went out.

"Dosha!"

She recognized the agonized tone.

"I'm here—safe!" she called back.

Allerton's face, pale against the oil-skins that glistened from a light in the cabin above, showed in the opening.

"You're standing on something. Can you reach my hand, my darling?"

The youth in her responded to this hope with a renewal of all her energies. She reached up, caught at his strong wrist.

"Both hands, dear girl. Don't be afraid!"

By some magical strength that was not all his she felt herself being drawn to comparative safety, gathered briefly to his heart.

"The stairway was blocked—water and wreckage. The boat's going fast. Quick, my dearest!"

He hurried her out on deck, where one of the crew stood waiting.

"All off, and one boat left. This way!"

With the deck slowly tilting on end under their very feet they made their way off, were lowered into the waiting boat.

"Shove off!" commanded Allerton briefly.

"Alec!" gasped Dosha. "Did he get away?"

"Yes. With Mademoiselle Dupres."

In five minutes they were a hundred yards from the ill-fated ship. Dosha, with one last look back, uttered a scream. A man was staggering toward the stern, as much of it as was above water, and as he climbed desperately into one lighted window his silhouette showed clear. It was Varesco, struggling against the awful, sucking tide to save her! Their voices were of no avail against the storm, and Dosha, with a pitiful moan, hid the sight from her vision.

So she did not see the *Gull* give way in a convulsive tremor, slide under the wild black waters as if it had never been.

Nor did she see or feel the suction which drew them into its fateful grip, ground the bow of the lifeboat against some irresistible force. For she had fainted.

When she opened her eyes she was in the water, lashed by Allerton's arm to a spar from the wreckage. And neither lifeboat nor the yacht were visible. But Ross was with her, guarding her as much as possible from the rough waves, keeping her chin above the water.

They drifted on through the night.

Fortunately the waters of the Mediterranean are warm. Almost magically, they breasted the breakers, tossed Heaven only knew where, until a gray film of dawn appeared.

"The others?" She asked it weakly.

"They must be safe. Only our boat was caught in the suction of the sinking ship. Dosha, my love—land!" he pointed eagerly.

There, barely a mile off, lay some bleak and desolate shore. The calmed waters assisted them toward it, for the tide was driving in. And just as a red sun rose they struggled up the wet sands.

For shelter they found a fisherman's hut, and the kindly people succored them with food and fire and dry clothes. Primitive needs, but danger and death are primitive, too! With her beautiful hair braided over her shoulders, barefooted, except for a pair of sandals, dressed in rude, unlovely garments, Dosha went to the man she loved, who waited for her outside. They had sent a messenger to the tiny town, would soon join their companions.

In the glory of the new day he held out his arms to her.

"Now that we have faced death to-

gether, are you going to deny me life?" he asked.

Varesco was dead, but bravely dead. And a great death can make obscure and forgotten a mean life. She could not speak of his cruelty, his supreme selfishness toward her. She sealed her lips forever.

"I might deny it to you—but not to myself. If you want me, Ross—"

She lifted her lips to his.

A few minutes later she laughed happily.

"Ross, are you sure you know what you want? Do you realize that this is where I belong—in a primitive hut, dressed in rags like these—with hanging hair and bare feet? Do you want this wandering beggarmaid?"

"More than anything in the world!"

"You have courage, dearest one!"

He clasped her to his heart.

"To love this wild Dosha you warn me against so often? I am rather proud of her, my dear. I do not know which of you it was who waited in that chamber of death, while the tide crept up over you, who sent Alec out to safety with the woman who had taken him from you! But the you that is brave and strong and beautiful, with the strength and beauty of your gypsy grandmother; that is proud, unyielding, uncomplaining—that composite you, of force and fire and endurance beyond other women; of breeding that is absolute, of noblesse oblige that is the heritage of kings—is my only love! I cannot give her up!"

She came to his arms, rested there content.

"And I—I am weary of my wanderings. Even we homeless ones have some resting place. Mine—is your heart!"

And so it proved to be.

Fool's Luck



By Beatrice Ravenel

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"The Elimination of Fernando," etc.



AS Laurie said afterward, there is no moral to this story. By all the laws of business, which are the laws of probability, it ought to have ended badly. It was just one of those things that happen, and that occasionally gratify you with the ways of Providence. It seems hard on Providence, somehow, that one should be surprised when it does the pleasant thing, but that's the way the business world feels about it. Anyway, it's the story of how Eleanor was saved from marrying a fool.

It began on shipboard, on the return trip from the Mediterranean. Eleanor Reigner leaned forward in her deck chair and said sharply:

"Who is the man in trousers? I wonder where the Hammersmith-Vidals caught him. He certainly doesn't trot with that sort of bunch when he's at home."

The description would have sounded vague in most places, trousers being accepted as the most, possibly the only, essential portion of the masculine wardrobe. On the *Homeric*, however, knickers were the wear, and a man without them looked almost spectacularly indecent.

"Bet you my scarab he's got a handle to his name," Laurie, her brother, remarked, taking the bit of polished en-

4—Ains.

amel from his pocket. "The H.-V.'s wouldn't bother with him otherwise. You can see he's a foreigner. I wonder where they dredged up that hyphen; it sounds made, not born."

Haidee, his wife, languidly raised her eyes. It was characteristic of Haidee to read the Baedeker on the way home. On the out voyage she was too busy meeting people, and after that one did things the whole time. Guidebooks were only intended to fill up chinks, anyway. They never told the really important things about little shops, and places where everybody couldn't go. She examined the scarab indifferently.

"I'll take your bet, though it isn't a very good one." She pulled her small, very chic hat over the hair that looked cut out of a single piece of jet, and under its shadow stared at the stranger. "Who is the man with the trousers?"

"What's remarkable about him?" demanded her husband. "Except that he's dressed for a morning reception in the Rue Saint Honoré, and he's good looking in a highly finished sort of style, he looks like all the rest of them. What's the lure?"

"He has such a latent sort of face," said Eleanor abstractedly. "As though a spark might set him off. And he seems so—so impracticable."

"That's exactly what you said about

the stray dog you adopted at Granada," Haidee put in. "Only if you adopt this one, you may have more trouble in disposing of him—when Tom comes home. You could hardly present him to a steward with a dot of ten dollars, as you did Lili."

"I'll find out," Laurie offered, in the amiable tone of a man who satisfies his own vulgar curiosity under cover of doing a kindness to his womenfolk. Eleanor, watching, saw him merge with the group that greeted him enthusiastically, in voices which the Hammer-smith-Vidals had not yet trained into conformity with their ultimate standards. After a decent interval Laurie strolled back and, passing his wife, deftly retrieved the scarab from her lap.

"I win," he announced. "This goes into Wayland's collection, instead of passing out of the family as a bridge prize." Wayland was their son, who at the age of twelve was already manifesting interests of the expensively artistic kind. "I forgot the middle, but the two ends are Baron de Varennes. He had also noticed us."

"*Us!*" murmured his wife with the sarcasm that only a wife uses.

In spite of the warning against the adoption of pets that may prove difficult to dispose of later, Baron Jacques de Mauban-Varennes, in the course of a very brief time, became just as intimate as the dog had been. Shipboard friendships are notoriously as quick growers as Jack's beanstalk, but the Frenchman's progress outdistanced most of them. In a few days' time he was speaking of them as his dear old friends, and making it abundantly plain that he found their society far more congenial than that of the auriferous H.-V.'s.

"Money is like fruit," he observed once, apropos of nothing in particular, except the long line, perhaps, of that prosperous family as it went by like a triumphant procession to capture its

favorite shuffleboard court. "Unless it has had time to ripen, it sets one's teeth on edge."

Laurie chuckled.

"That's why we have so many dentifrice ads in the backs of our magazines," he suggested.

De Varennes glanced up questioningly, not sure of his footing in the field of American humor, before smiling.

"Your friends are waiting for you," Eleanor noted, in the subacid tone that was becoming a little too habitual.

"I am better here," the Frenchman responded calmly. Then he added politely, "Though they have been very good; they have offered to procure me invitations to clubs and receptions. *Ma foi*, the only invitations that I really desire are those to build bridges."

"Is that your business?" Haidee asked. It had not occurred to her that he had any useful occupation, though she knew that the prospectuses of Continental financial undertakings are rididled with titles.

The note of interest in her voice roused him. There was all about Haidee a soft, warm atmosphere that went with her large, brooding type of beauty, and that had nothing whatever to do with her real thoughts. She never had to encourage confidences; all she had to do was to gaze gently, and they overwhelmed her. The dog had been devoted to her and had bored her a great deal. Now the man turned to her eagerly, a spark in his tired, long-lidded eyes.

"Yes, madame; I am for the moment leaving the interior of Tunis, where I have a bridge under construction."

"How exciting," said Haidee, who did not think it exciting at all. "How wonderful to be able to do things like that."

"It is wonderful—if one succeeds," said De Varennes, with the pride of the craftsman.

"Won't you tell me something about it?"

As Eleanor, who seldom exercised the candor of a sister-in-law, told her afterwards, she brought it on herself. The girl sat in silence, her short upper lip curled, and listened to the waves and billows of figures, estimates, and technical terms going over Haidee's head. It served her right. She was getting to be a professional confidante. She drew people out without caring anything about them or their intimate affairs, to show her power over them, or to amuse herself. It was inhumane; it was treating them as though they were not human beings at all; as though they were fools.

Well, this man might be a fool; you never could tell. Men with pleasant voices and nice, aristocratic hands turned out to be fools when you knew them too well. Here he was giving himself away already. The mass of information had run into another side of his work, the personal side. He must care awfully about it, to be pouring it out like that; his ambitions, his—oh, Heaven, he was practically spilling his ideals over Haidee now. Gratitude was raying out from him, delight at finding somebody willing to listen to him. That argued a certain ineffective naïveté. Strong men didn't melt like butter in the sun when a sweetly purring woman evinced a little cordiality. Reserve argued strength.

She listened, one fact seeping through her contemptuous mood, breaking through the slightly singsong, equally stressed syllables of his English, which was excellent in form, but Gallic in accent. The man was in dead earnest; he cared most intensely about whatever it was that he was talking about, and the necessity was on him of being understood. He had *le cœur gros*, the longing for sympathy. One would get that way, living too long with one interest. Who should know that better than she did, with her own private little devil gnawing away inside, urging her

to pounce him into somebody's lap and get a new, comforting opinion on him?

But it would never occur to her to choose Haidee's lap for the experiment. Suddenly a wave of hot indignation went through her, a feeling of partisanship with the man. To feel like that, so deeply, so drastically, and to waste it on the wrong person—why, it was like cheapening some really valuable and beautiful thing. She looked around for Laurie. He, at least, could appreciate this man talk about pressure and geological formations. She could see him across the deck, exchanging the usual time of day on the rate of speed the vessel was making with one of the ship's officers. And Haidee sat with her veil of rapt attention drawn over her eyes, behind which she could sleep with them open, and not even listen.

"When did you say your bridge would be finished?" Eleanor asked abruptly. It was a confounded nuisance, but if nobody else would come to the quixotic rescue of a fine feeling, she would have to make the sacrifice.

The intentness died out of his glance.

"But I did not say, mademoiselle. I would give everything I have—still—to be able to say." His eyes, puckered at the corners into fine lines, as even young eyes become after they have lived for years under the African sun, took her in; the hard, athletic type that is handsome as a boy is handsome, the almost curveless figure. This was the beauty that scorned to exercise any feminine lure, the Amazon type. He forgot to spare her the bitterness that he had spared the other woman. "It may never be done."

"How long have you been at work on it?"

"Three years."

"But that is dreadful," cried the girl, shocked into warmth.

Instantly his glance softened. She, too, understood; she cared. In more succinct, clipped phrases, he explained

his case again, and she, leaning back in her chair, received his fixed gaze with the unembarrassed coolness of the American adolescent. She was registering a mixed impression, one part largely disturbed by the other:

The beginning was an irrigation scheme, a system whose one source was the river.

His hair was a good, burnished black, brushed from a high French forehead, rather narrow through the temples.

The government, had it been its own affair, would have abandoned work long ago, but it was altogether willing to allow private individuals to go on spending their money on an experiment which might turn out well in the end. He found that reasonable.

He had *talking* eyebrows.

To make the bridge the solid and permanent affair of which he foresaw the necessity, he had overridden the objections of the directors and had personally put into the undertaking a large sum of money.

If he were really worked up, those tired eyes would blaze, and the straight lips under the small mustache grow obstinate as the devil.

"And what seems to be the trouble?" she found herself asking, in an absurd instinct to draw his attention from her thoughts.

"The trouble is a quicksand," he answered grimly. "That is what we have had to fight. We have dredged deeper and deeper." He made a gesture horribly expressive of a clutching grasp. "But I have not yet given up hope."

"They say," Haidee put in, "that in primitive times they used to bury a human being under a bridge post to make it stand." She liked to dabble in folklore; one found such curious details.

De Varennes gave a short laugh.

"Then mine should stand for all eternity. A human being's whole life and

soul—to say nothing of all the money he could lay his hands on—has been thrown into that gaping hole."

"But you have given it up now?" Haidee asked regretfully.

"But no. The work under my subordinate, a most intelligent young man named Lodère, goes on always. I am journeying to America with the expectation of interesting capital, as you say, in the enterprise. It will open up a great tract of country, rich in minerals, and when irrigated fertile enough. Then I shall go back—"

"And throw more money into the hole," Eleanor supplied cynically. She was afraid that the man might, after all, be a fool, and the thought filled her with unreasonable irritation.

"*Justement*, mademoiselle," he flashed back, "and myself after it, if necessary."

With a swift, inclusive bow, he left them and swung off along the deck. Haidee picked up her book with a yawn.

"Isn't it astonishing, his telling us all that? These foreigners are unaccountable. Rather ridiculous, I think."

Eleanor restrained the "You made him do it," that rose to her lips. There was no use in stirring Haidee up. Privately she resolved that the ingenuous outlander shouldn't give himself away to any of them, if she could prevent it. It didn't seem fair.

It was in pursuance of this determination that Eleanor's treatment of De Varennes became even more cavalier than ever until Haidee remarked in her silky tones that the offhand, athletic style was all the rage with the French, and that the best way to attract them was to exaggerate it; then they were perfectly crazy about you. She played quoits with him, taught him mah jong, tramped the three-times-round constitutional after breakfast with him, and exchanged all the possible opinions on cars, horses, and guns. Of the last two he knew a good deal. She did her

best to steer the conversation away from intimacies, but it seemed that the sluices of his confidence, having been opened once in her direction, showed a dangerous tendency to keep on flowing. Perhaps his perturbing straightforwardness—a trait which she had not associated with the Gallic character—came from living in the desert, and getting talked out on the usual social topics, so that one was obliged to fall back on fundamentals.

One morning she had made some jesting remark on the formality of his appearance. Rather to her horror, his face turned a dull red, and she found herself given the freedom of an entirely new section of his existence.

"I wear these clothes because I have no other kind," he said with a sort of bravado. "Those sport garments that are de rigeur here, I wore them in Tunis, wore them for the purpose for which they are designed—sport and work in the open—so that they are too much used to appear among these brand-new specimens. I cannot buy new ones, merely for the exigencies of one voyage, because it is necessary that I should husband my resources. I must appear prosperously dressed when I present myself before those influential business gentlemen who have the fortunes of myself and my work in their hands. It is for the same reason that I travel first class on this hideously expensive boat. One must make a good stage entrance. Otherwise, every sou that I can scrape and rake—how I love your idioms—goes into that African hole. Now do you understand?"

"Perfectly," said the girl coldly. She had grown a little pale under the impact of his speech. He had thrown the facts at her bitterly, vindictively, as though to punish her for the irony which he felt under her manner. "I don't see why you should feel it necessary to tell me all that. Your wardrobe hardly interests me."

They faced each other like duelists, with challenging eyes. His swept her. She was wearing a costume of white knitted silk, a small hat well down over her russet waves, and a cape hanging from her shoulders; frightfully expensive and outrageous simple. In the sea breeze it molded her disconcertingly. She pulled the cape closer.

"Yours interests me very much," he responded deliberately. "It is so clever, art concealing art, money concealing money. You are wonderful, you American women. When I met you I said, 'She is clever; she understands me.' Now I say, 'She is too clever; she sees through me.'"

The girl put her hand on the railing behind her; she had the unaccountable feeling that she needed support, that her knees were trembling.

"What do I see?" she asked, smiling faintly.

He came so near that she thought he was going to touch her.

"You see a one-ideaed man," he answered, in a voice like a hiss. "For years I have had only one desire until my friends have said, '*Il est fou; il a l'idée fixe.*' Now for the first time I see the danger of awakening to another, of caring as much—more—for something else. No, I will not tell you what; I refuse to give you that cold satisfaction. You shall not see that." He turned on his heel and moved away in one of his dramatic exits.

She felt breathless. He was a queer man. Had he been making love to her? She had too much experience to believe that lightly of any man. Perhaps he had meant—Haidee! There was that something in her that snared men, that had captured the yearning, romantic streak that Laurie concealed under his hard-bitten and practical exterior. A quiet smile, not devoid of malice, went over Eleanor's face. Well, in that case they should have a chaperon. Not herself, some one much more in the way.

Monsieur de Varennes wanted to interest capital, did he? He might as well begin with Laurie, who not only represented a considerable amount of his own, but had a way of influencing other people's. She would get Laurie interested in the man, so that the stream of confidences might be switched onto him, where it would not do so much harm.

The upshot of this plan revealed itself one evening some weeks after they had reached New York. Monsieur de Varennes had just taken his departure, the high light on the top of his polished black head—it must be japanned, Eleanor declared—had but a moment ago flashed in the doorway in one of his Continental bows.

"It's queer the habit that fellow has got into of strolling in and out like a tame cat," Laurie observed, flicking the ash from his cigar into a small silver object that looked as though it might have come off an altar. "An habitué—I guess that's what he'd call it. I don't mind. When you get him away from his subject he's the most stimulating kind of a chap. Extraordinary experiences; been everywhere; seen unheard-of things. One of these days I'm going to shake you women and go round the world with him. Liberal education."

"You're crazy about him," said Haidee. She lounged on the huge sofa in the corner, her feet up. "So were the children. So's O Haru San. The only one who isn't is Eleanor; she's positively rude to him."

Eleanor ignored this speech. She had had practice in ignoring.

"But what about his subject? How's it getting along?"

Laurie frowned.

"Nothing doing. I've got experts to look into it, and the consensus of opinion is that the man's crazy. He's practically the company. When shareholders balked he'd buy 'em out, until he had a free hand. He used to be a

wealthy man. I've made him hear reason in one particular. To-day he indicated that he would be glad to take the job that I can get for him. Carmine knows about his record before he started this foolishness, and will take him on."

"I can't imagine Jacques taking orders from anybody." Haidee lifted one foot and then the other, examining the buckles critically. "I suppose that means he'll be sent away to build more bridges. What a nuisance. He's a perfect treasure about the house. He tells me of the queerest Oriental stunts to have, and nobody can take the chill off a dinner as he can. Bet you he won't keep the job a week."

Haidee was wrong. It was quite three weeks before Laurie came in one day, looking ruffled, and threw a note across the writing table that did not quite belong in the quattrocento drawing-room.

"Well, here's your lame duck in my lap again," he grumbled. "Do you know what the fool's done? He is a fool. Reluctantly I admitted it to Carmine, who would have burst a blood vessel if I hadn't. He disapproved, Jacques did, of something, and what does he do but march into the boss' office and tell him how to run his business. When Carmine got through talking they disinfected the office."

"Exactly what Jacques would have done," Haidee commented placidly. "What are you going to do with him now?"

Eleanor said nothing.

"I like the way you put it up to me," snorted Laurie, his well-defined nose assuming a higher angle. "He's not my pet."

"Oh, yes, he is," Eleanor abruptly assured him. "When you pull a person out of a hole once it gives him a heaven-sent right to own you for the rest of your natural life. He'll be a regular old man of the sea."

"Well, Mellone might take him on my say-so," Laurie owned up shamefacedly.

Haidee laughed out teasingly, but his sister regarded him with the quizzical affection that was the extreme demonstration of sentiment between them. They were a reserved family, the Reignors, inclined to expect you to take their deeper feelings for granted.

As the winter wore on it seemed that "old man of the sea" was the correct term. Whether through pure intractability, or through some quality of leadership which could not brook submission, Baron de Varennes turned out to be one of those men who cannot fit into any other man's business. The Carmine affair repeated itself, not once, nor twice. The intervals became more frequent during which Eleanor, coming in from the studio where she was modeling this winter, would find the Frenchman arranging the music for one of Haidee's evenings, or patiently dictating some astounding menu. He haunted the house as though there were nowhere else that he cared to go, though the Hammersmith-Vidals had been as good as their word in the matter of invitations. Sometimes Eleanor caught a glimpse of his unhappy eyes across a crowded restaurant, or saw them following her as she danced. At Christmas he was included in the party at Hilltop, the Reignor place in the Adirondacks, and acquitted himself well at the winter sports, cheering up astonishingly. But the girl understood that his heart was in none of these things, just as hers was not. Each of them had a vital preoccupation.

This fact, or rather this brace of facts, was borne in upon Laurie one harsh and sleety afternoon when he came in out of the inclement world to as touching a domestic scene as he had ever witnessed. Burning logs were sending shivery lines of red up the columns of the tall Italian marble fireplace, and making the Khotassan hearthrug like a bed of blue

flowers. On one side of this sat Jacques de Varennes, cherishing O Haru San, the Pekingese, on his lap. On the opposite side of the fire a small table had been placed, covered with *filet* lace, and set with Norwegian silver, chased with an all-over pattern like a basketry woven by trolls. Jacques was wasting no admiration on the exquisite appointments; his hungry eyes were fixed on the girl who was performing small, assiduous operations with the tea things.

For the first time Laurie understood what an enormously attractive force one's sister may exercise over other men. The long lines of her rice-green draperies turned Eleanor into a 'nymph. The firelight transmuted the hair that outlined her cheek into the inverted, red-gold wings of a Valkyrie's helmet. Without ostensible reason she looked up and met De Varennes' smile with a softer, sweeter one. A curious sort of smile, thought the onlooker, not the sort that carefree young people on a small lark of their own might exchange. It was more like—well, a truce, a moment of content snatched from two separate and uneasy lives. It gave him the sensation of intrusion in his own house.

"Gad, I hate to spoil sport," he said to himself as he advanced with more noise than usual, "but I guess I ought to take a hand."

He took it, as he realized, clumsily. Jacques, gently spilling the tea to a footstool, got up to meet him, and both men remained standing, Jacques leaning against a malachite table that stood near the rug. Laurie held a square, thick envelope out to his sister.

"This was in the hall," he said. "Japanese postmark. I guess I know the contents; papers said to-day that the ship had been ordered home."

Eleanor laid the letter down and calmly poured tea into an eggshell cup. "It'll be good to see old Tom again," Laurie pursued doggedly.

The faintest tinkle of silver on por-

celain sounded as Eleanor placed one of the old rat-tail spoons in the saucer.

"This is right, I think. Two lemon, no sugar."

Jacques made no move to take the cup.

"And who, may I take the liberty to ask, is Tom?" he inquired, his gaze on the girl.

"Tom," said Laurie, with the air of administering the coup de grâce, "is Lieutenant Thomas Craye Fairchild, my future brother-in-law."

There was a sharp, horrible little sound, as though the man who stood with his hand behind him, leaning lightly on the malachite table, had broken his finger nails on the unyielding surface. Then De Varennes said gravely:

"My best felicitations. And now I must take my leave. To-morrow, as you know, I leave New York for a time." This was to Laurie. "Will you transmit my adieu to madame, your wife, with my most sincere gratitude for all her kindness?"

Laurie followed him into the hall, and the murmur of their voices came to the girl as she sat motionless by the fire. When her brother came back she met him with a pale, defiant smile.

"Now I suppose he's gone home to cry," she said.

Laurie picked up a small cake from the table and broke it viciously.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself. If you want to flirt, why can't you pick out a fellow that can defend himself, instead of a down-and-outer like that?"

"What's the matter with him now?" cried the girl sharply.

Laurie threw the fragment of cake angrily into the fire—always, as Haidee would have told him, a terribly unlucky thing to do.

"The matter with him is that he's an incapable; not a moron—he's clever enough, God knows—but an ineffective, a helpless fool. Somebody in one of

Pinero's plays says that there's a large class of young men who would be not only charming but useful members of society, if they were only presented with about a thousand pounds a year. Well, that's Jacques' class. He can't work in harness; he can't conform or submit. He's as bad as one of these damned artists when it comes to temperament. I've pulled ropes for him all winter, straining my influence, making myself a confounded nuisance to my friends. And now he's topping it off by falling in love with you. Well, damn it all, I'm through with him. You may have noticed that the jobs I've landed have been getting smaller all the time. This one is a pretty subordinate one out in Cleveland. If he doesn't make good this time—" He finished with a gesture of repudiation, then walked heatedly up and down the room, as a man does nowhere but in his own habitat. "I don't know why I get so excited. The man gets a hold on you; you keep worrying. Let's talk about something pleasanter; let's talk about Tom."

Eleanor sat up with a curious decision.

"I don't consider that a pleasanter subject," she said, hardly moving her lips.

"Eh?"

"I'm afraid that you'll have to part with him as a future brother-in-law."

"Well, of all the foolishness—" Laurie began. The somberness of the girl's whole manner checked the angry words on his lips. "Have you broken your engagement?"

"No, but I'm going to," said Eleanor rigidly to the fire.

He came behind her and laid a brotherly hand on her cheek.

"Now, old man, don't you do anything rash," he advised kindly. "Think it over. That's no way to treat a perfectly good fiancé, to jilt him when he's thousands of miles away, out of a clear sky. Wait till he gets home, anyhow. You might find the old impression re-

viving. There's nothing like a man on the spot, you know."

"No," said Eleanor stonily.

Laurie hesitated.

"What's the trouble?" he blurted out. "The well-known geisha girl? I tell you, those things don't mean anything. They're regrettable, but there's nothing a man forgets so quickly. Look at it broadly. Tom's a good man, eminently suitable, to be trusted, once you're married to him. If I were you, I'd overlook a weak moment or so."

"If you loved him."

"Of course."

"Well," said the girl with dreary finality, "I don't love him. I know that now. I'm sorry—sorry—I made the mistake, and I don't intend to perpetuate it."

She got up, and her brother found no argument with which to detain her. Eleanor had always managed her own affairs, and pretty intelligently, too. He was upset and mortified about it because Tom had been his own entry for the matrimonial stakes, but you couldn't marry a girl off against her own inclination. That day had gone by. He wondered how Haidee would take the news.

To his surprise she took it, not with the contemptuous remarks on flighty girls who didn't know their own minds which he had rather expected, but with a queer smoldering resentment. It was outrageous, dishonorable, to treat a man like that. Laurie ought to exert his authority as head of the family to keep her from disgracing herself. The engagement hadn't been announced, but several people knew of it, and the Fairchilds would be horrid. It was only when he lost his temper and informed her that the affair was neither his business nor hers that she desisted. Then she burst into tears and accused him of a lack of consideration. Laurie came out of the encounter with the regular conviction that it was no use trying to

understand women. They weren't people; they were something else.

It was at this time that he began to astonish his circle by displaying a highly unusual tendency to philosophize. He would wake up out of a brown study and observe, apropos of the stock report: "I wonder whether we don't make too much of the mere ability to scratch up a living." Once he observed profoundly: "That man Wells is right. Half the brains in the world are wasted by being forced into the wrong jobs." All of which speculation, in the mouth of the business man, amounts to flat heresy. At intervals he would wonder aloud what Haidee's angel idiot was doing with himself now. Except for a brief note of acknowledgment, no news had come from Jacques.

It was curious how deep the stranger had struck his roots into their household, instead of resembling, like most entertaining foreigners, a bunch of cut flowers that comes in and goes out again. Another curious circumstance was that the two women spoke of him only when they were *not* alone together. Indeed, they were seldom that. Haidee had her own friends, and was going about feverishly, growing haggard and restive in temper, instead of taking her usual calm, excellent care of herself. She won a great deal at bridge, and her luck only increased with tension.

As for Eleanor, she appreciated the value of a studio, especially after she had got a few bookracks on the market. It was an escape. People took one's work seriously and left one alone. They were ready to believe that the faint hollows under her cheekbones came from the awful lot of energy that creative art took out of one. Girls asked her wistfully—for some of them really loved her—not to work so hard. It was bad advice; work was the only thing that helped.

Altogether it was a trying winter. One day, in the first watery beginnings

of spring, Laurie came home with a perturbed manner in which the chief ingredient was relief.

"Well," he announced without preamble, "the cat came back."

His tone made the eyes of the two women spring toward him. He took his place on the hearthrug with the air of an orator who holds his public in the hollow of his hand. The fire formed an oasis of light in the shadowy drawing-room. Eleanor had been knitting near it while Haidee, on her favorite corner sofa, had been lounging on the cushions of Venetian embroidery, teasing the dog.

"I was beginning to think he'd used up his ninth life, but he walked into the office this morning."

From the dusky corner came Haidee's veiled tones.

"How—how did he look?"

Laurie paused for an intolerable second, a pause that seemed waiting for a woman's hysterical scream to fill it.

"He looked," he uttered deliberately, "as though he had been through hell."

The darkling voice sounded again:

"Why didn't he write to us—you?"

"You may well ask. I was so furious with him that I told him it was an insult to his friends, not giving them the opportunity of helping. Then the storm broke. It was the idea of help that he couldn't stand. Damned pride. Felt he'd been a nuisance, taken too much already. Of course he lost the Cleveland job promptly."

Eleanor asked in a tone that sounded callous:

"What's he been doing all this time?"

"Anything that came his way. At last he seems to have drifted into a cheap vaudeville company, and that was the breaking point. He put his head in his hands when he came to that and—cried! 'Mon dieu, the filth they wanted me to sing!' Anyway, that brought him back to New York, and he came to me, as he said, because his spirit was broken.

Poor devil." Laurie's own voice grew husky.

If it had not been for the footstool, they might not have found out. Eleanor got up and went toward the door. The footstool, a marvelous affair with a Gothic design worked on the cushion, was directly in her path, and Fate sat upon it. When the will has its work cut out for it keeping control of the nerves, and is suddenly called on to maintain the physical balance of its owner, something gives away. With a harsh, ugly, uncontrollable sob that was a general confession as well, Eleanor righted herself and stumbled out of the room.

"Good God!" said Laurie aghast, oblivious of the silence in the corner. "I knew he did, but I'm damned if I suspected that she— That's why she broke with Tom. And I asked De Varennes to come to dinner to-morrow. Didn't bring him home with me because it was too much like taking in a sick cat. Had to force a loan on him for some decent clothes. He only consented to take it when I told him that I knew of a job he could have right away. In fact he'd have to leave for Philadelphia to-morrow night, if he wanted it. Only a clerkship this time." He began walking up and down, talking in jerks. "Glad there's one thing I didn't tell while she was in the room. Do you know what he wanted me to do, sweetie? Give him a job up at Hilltop—gardener or something. He could do that, had once owned a country property. He said, 'It is no degradation to serve those whom we love.' Gad!"

O Haru San, who was cuddled against her mistress, gave a piercing and outraged yelp. Haidee scooped her up and bore her from the room, leaving Laurie to work out his mood for himself. He was really extraordinarily moved. After a while he wandered upstairs in search of the children, who were at home for the spring holidays,

feeling the need of a cheerful and unknowing element in this baffling world. He maintained a sympathetic relation with them both, though he saw very little of them. Wayland and Dorothy, who was two years older than her brother, were brought up according to the best modern methods, which provided boarding school all winter, camps all summer, and parties during the lesser vacations. They were generally kind to their father, whom they considered a good sport.

When they learned who was coming to dinner they willingly consented to remain at home on the following evening. De Varennes exercised over them the same fascination that had entrapped Laurie. Their hilarious welcome submerged whatever strain might have accompanied the return of the lame duck. So bent were they on relating their own adventures since the last merry meeting, that they forgot to insist on his. It was only by the most shameless maneuvering that their father got them away from Jacques after dinner, enticing them into the music room on the plea of some new records. He knew that he was doing the wrong thing, encouraging the playing with fire, but he couldn't help it. The hungry, doglike expression in Jacques' eyes, which rested on Eleanor when he thought himself unobserved, begging for some obscure mercy at her hands, went to Laurie's heart. All the man was asking for was just a little kindness to take away with him and dream over for the rest of his broken life.

And it seemed likely that that was about all he was to get. Frankly, Laurie told himself, he couldn't understand Eleanor. She was defiantly gay, as gay as Dorothy, as regardless of motives under the surface. Well, perhaps the presence of other people made her hide her real feelings. Hang it all, the man should have his little moment of comfort.

For three quarters of an hour Laurie kept the disturbing element engaged with the charms of music. Then they returned to the drawing-room to find Jacques and Eleanor primly seated on opposite sides of the fireplace, and Haidee on her sofa, placidly knitting at the stocking for Wayland that she remembered when he came home.

Laurie was so disgusted that he dropped morosely beside his wife and began taking her to task in a tone that was positively rude.

"Haven't you any heart?" he hissed, like a stage villain, between his teeth. "You don't suppose they wanted you, do you?"

She responded in similarly resentful but lowered tones.

"Crazy. I think she did. Besides you don't consider him a proper parti, surely?"

The children were at their prey again. It was safe to talk, if one kept on hissing.

"I mightn't have thought so once, but now I don't know. Money isn't everything, sweetie. He'd be all right if the economic problem was removed; he's good stuff at bottom. No danger of his being an idle rich on her money; he'd go right on working."

"Throwing it into a hole in Tunis," his wife suggested in soft, scathing tones. Her nostrils were pinched in a way he recognized and dreaded. "You're perfectly wild, Laurie."

"Oh, maybe," he conceded unhappily. "Only, if they both care, it mightn't be a whole lot dignified for him, but it would be less tragic for the pair of them. Besides, he's a Frenchman; he's used to the idea of a girl's bringing a dot."

"He's also used to there being something on both sides," Haidee reminded him. "Not that it isn't a very trying situation."

The most trying moment of it came at the end when Jacques was making his

adieux. It apparently came over him that he must express his gratitude in a ceremonious manner, something solid and memorable. In order to produce easiness of feeling in the most expeditious way, Laurie had produced some prewar stuff of unexceptional quality. Glass in hand, De Varennes rose to his feet, and Wayland found himself listening to the sort of speech of which he had read in the pages of the adored Dumas. D'Artagnan wasn't in it. Such warmth united with such delicacy, so ancien régime—that was it.

Jacques drank all their healths, his mother's first: "that pairel among women." He kissed Haidee's hand, then took a step toward Eleanor and paused. Wayland already knew that only married hands were kissed in the way of ceremony, but Dorothy got hers in the way so brazenly that it also received a salute, to her intense gratification. Then Jacques was at the door, his voice veiled and incoherent all of a sudden. The last glimpse of an infinitely pathetic figure going down the street into the night, forgetting to raise his umbrella. The rain splashed on his bowed head, and the pavement winked evilly under his lagging feet. The boy dreamed of roads all right, rainy roads that led nowhere.

And then silence.

A certain impulse of delicacy kept Laurie for some time from inquiring about his protégé. He put it off from day to day, but one morning he came downstairs determined to write to the Philadelphia firm, if only to shelve the conviction that disaster, habituated to Jacques' trail, was dogging him again. With a frown he opened the morning paper, glanced at the headlines and turned the pages indifferently. Suddenly, from a brief paragraph squeezed in at the bottom of a column, a name sprang at him. Yes, the news came from Philadelphia.

He read it stupidly. An unknown

man who had paid for a night's lodging in a cheap lodging house known as the Fleming building—the only night's lodging he would ever need. Medium height, dark, slender, perhaps thirty years old. He had been found the next morning lying on the bed, fully dressed, a revolver in his hand, a bullet hole through his head. A clear case of suicide. The only clue to the identity of the deceased was part of a visiting card which had been found inside the lining of the coat, as though it had slipped through the torn pocket: "Mau-
ban de Var—" That was all.

Laurie kept on looking at it, hardly noticing that some one had entered the room and was reading over his shoulder. When he saw who it was realities came back to him. He felt ashamed of himself. At least he might have protected her against learning it like this; he might have remembered to break it gently. After all, though, what difference did it make? Nothing could make it less dreadful to her. He put his arm around his sister's shoulders for one piteous second, then dropped the paper on the table and hurried out of the room. That seemed kindest. With some confused idea that women wanted each other at these crises, he started upstairs after Haidee.

She met him halfway. She was dressed in a lilac negligee that made her more a thing of luxury than ever, and she smelled like an armful of delicate spring flowers. He touched her arm and said urgently:

"Do go in there to Eleanor, and be nice to her."

Then he went to his own room for a very bad quarter of an hour. Poor Laurie assured himself that he ought to have foreseen this ending. Why, it was what any idiot might have anticipated, and anticipating, have prevented. What was worse, he knew that Eleanor was feeling the same, only immeasurably more intensely.

Haidee entered the breakfast room, her large amber-colored eyes opened wide, and without a word Eleanor handed her the paper, went to the door, and locked it. With the rigidity of a statue she watched Haidee crumple in her chair and burst into a storm of tears.

"You needn't let the servants know," she said.

The dead composure of her voice seemed to infuriate the other woman. She lifted her distorted face, careless of how hideous it might look in its grimace of hatred and passion, and struck the table with her clenched hand.

"It's your fault—your fault!" she gasped. She fought with a fresh accession of sobs, rubbing her eyes violently with Laurie's napkin. "I did what I could. I offered him all the money he wanted, and—and he behaved as though I had insulted him."

"You had," said Eleanor. There was no expression in her voice, but her face was a frozen mask of despair; it was difficult to imagine that it would ever be otherwise. Haidee's small fist opened and spread toward her, as though it would have liked to fasten on her flesh.

"How can you take it like that—like a graven image? He's dead! Oh, my God, he's dead! And to have it happen like this, without a word of warning!" The head went down again, grinding itself against the white cloth despairingly.

"I had warning," Eleanor said stonily. "I've expected it ever since he left. I'm used to it."

"Then why, for Heaven's sake," gasped Haidee, "why didn't you save him? Love! You don't know what it means. You didn't love him—not as I—"

Eleanor's hand closed over her mouth.

"Don't say it," she said warningly. "You won't feel like this always. You've never cared for me, Haidee, but

I don't want you to hate me. One of these days you'll be glad, you'll feel more kindly toward me, if you can say to yourself, 'Anyway, I never told her that.' Think—think of Laurie."

Haidee drew a long breath.

"But you didn't save him. Why didn't you? If you had been nicer to him, this wouldn't have happened. I'd rather have seen him married to you than—this. Why didn't you?"

The girl stared over the other's head, her eyebrows puckered, despairing of making any one else understand.

"I couldn't kill his pride," she said in a barely audible whisper. "I couldn't tell him, in so many words, that I knew he would never make good, and so I was offering myself as a consolation prize. It would have taken the last drops of his courage and his self-respect from him. I had to let him go and fight his own way back to me, even if—even if—" Her eyes closed, as though the vision of what might have been had been blotted out.

"Oh, stop it, stop it!" sobbed Haidee. "You and your ideals—that let him die. Oh, don't let anybody come in. I can't see anybody, I can't, I can't!"

A faint but persistent knocking had for several moments been sounding at the door.

"Go away!" Haidee almost shrieked.

The scared voice of Bertha, the parlor maid, came through the panels.

"Madame, there is some one to see you."

Haidee swept across the room and struck the door.

"Go away."

There was a murmur on the other side. Then Bertha, more agitated than ever:

"But, madame, he insists on seeing you."

"Open the door!" cried Eleanor.

She pushed Haidee to one side and did it herself. For an instant she stood in the opening more statuelike than be-

fore, rooted to the ground. But this time it was a statue of spring, of hope, of the young goddess of love rising from a rose-strewn sea, of everything startled into life by the incredible power of happiness and youth and awakening passion.

Providence had done the pleasant thing.

In the hall stood Jacques, Jacques like the hero in the fifth act, resplendent, looking, as Eleanor told him long afterward, like a fashion plate that had gone to heaven and returned with a celestial smile. Bertha went past him swiftly into the room where a pale and limp woman had dropped back into a chair, and lay alarmingly still, but he was oblivious of this. He saw nothing but the awakening statue, the Galatea that belonged to him. With one conquering gesture he put his arm about her and propelled her through the hall into the drawing-room, that room of memories. Then he took her into an embrace that recognized no resistance and no reluctance, and poured into her ear the tenderest epithets afforded by the vocabulary of the language of lovers.

"You're not dead, you're not dead!" was all Eleanor could find to say. She said it over and over.

Jacques tore his eyes from her to raise them to heaven.

"Dead—with you in my arms?" he ejaculated. "O dieu, how I am alive!"

Unbelievable as it may seem, the explanation came only with the excited appearance of Laurie, who came downstairs at a dash when the news had filtered up to him. Eleanor was incapable of caring for anything but the unbelievable rapture of the present instant. Jacques was here, here under her hands, under her lips, Jacques protesting that he loved her, had loved her from the moment that her cool eyes had compassionated him.

"But—but—but what's happened?" shouted Laurie.

De Varennes seized him by both hands.

"My bridge! My bridge!" he exulted. "They have struck bottom at last, and at the bottom they have found—what do you suppose? No, not gold, not diamonds. But they have found phosphates. They ship phosphates from Tunis by the shipload, as you may know. How did the work go on without me? You remember my assistant, that very intelligent young man named Loderé? Well, the hole got him, just as it had got me. I sent him every sou that I could scrape and rake, and when I could send no more, he—*brave garçon*—won a prize in the lottery, God being good to him, and went on with the dredging. He shall not suffer. And when they struck the phosphates behold how all is changed. We are no longer two madmen; we are men of vision. The irrigation will go on; the phosphates will go out; the bridge will be my monument forever! Serious business men who know me, even in this country, are ready to advance me all that I need."

"And the first thing you do is to get some glad rags and go courting—like the frog," suggested Laurie.

"But naturally," responded De Varennes.

Eleanor laid her hand on his arm.

"The man who died," she said gently. "Who was he?"

"Poor Dumont, a man I met in my pension in Philadelphia, a fellow countryman, poorer than I was. I gave him some of my garments, and the card must have slipped from the pocket, as the paper says. I hoped to see you before that shocking thing came to your eyes. If I had known where to find him before it was too late! But he disappeared."

"Where's Haidee?" asked Laurie, glancing round. "Does she know?"

As he spoke Haidee entered the room. Eleanor braced herself, but

there was no need. Her sister-in-law's manner had returned to its composure, her complexion to its exquisitely touched-up sleekness. Very prettily she made the necessary felicitations. Only Eleanor knew that the kiss she seemed to press upon the bride-elect's cheek did not touch it. Truly, with a properly trained woman habit is second nature, and the social exigencies are nature itself.

Eleanor came nearer to admiring her sister-in-law than she had ever done. There was no fear that Haidee would ever again refer to that poignant hour during which they had dropped the masks. She was game; she could accept defeat and go on playing up. Above all, there was no danger that Laurie's peace of mind would ever be disturbed by the image of the frenzied and love-distraught woman whom he had never seen.

And that, no doubt, is why Laurie as-

sured her that night that the story of his new future brother-in-law was an inconsequent story, a story without a moral. According to all the rules it ought to have ended badly. Jacques was the predestined victim; the phosphate beds were a pure afterthought, slipped in, like a blessing, at the bottom of a quicksand; the plot was too fantastic. Above all, a harebrained, one-ideaed person is a species of fool, and it was clearly impossible that Eleanor could be in love with a fool. Haidee never could have been.

"I met you first," said Haidee, playing the game. When he kissed her for the compliment she looked down at her hands and smiled an odd, twisted smile.

"Well," said Laurie, pleased with the world, "of course he isn't a fool. He's a brilliant chap, in his way. But he certainly has fool's luck."

And from his wife's bored heart rose the silent cry, "So have you!"



ARTHUR HAMIL, famous Hungarian portrait painter, asked if he did not think the American working girl more beautiful than the average society woman, replied that American society women were very beautiful. "All of them," he said, "want to be portrayed as having youthful forms, and since most of them are, in fact, athletic, it is easy to fulfill their desire."



PARISIANS maintain that Americans lack subtlety in the use of perfumes. A Frenchwoman never puts perfume on a handkerchief. And since the scent should be delicately noticeable only when one moves, she puts a drop behind the ears, on her shoulders, hides a bit of scented cotton in her tresses or in her handbag, and lightly touches the palms of her hands before donning her gloves. But to drench a handkerchief—that practice the Parisian regards with horror.



THE tables are turned, and London now apes America. Princess Mary appears wearing tortoise-shell glasses; the prince, it is said, admits to an interest, at least, in chewing gum; English palates are learning to like grapefruit, cocktails, and iced water. Even the frock-coated, top-hatted gentry end their stroll beside Rotten Row by "stopping in to have one of those American ices," as they call an ice-cream soda. Five o'clock tea has become more elaborate with the introduction of charlotte russe, strawberry shortcake, and frilly sandwiches. While skyscrapers and jazz dance halls have invaded London along with American slang.

Red Louis Heels

By Valma Clark

Author of "The Middle of the Tale,"
"The Echo," etc.



THE girl sat on an old, decayed dock at the edge of the little lake and sobbed. Her chin resting on her hunched-up knees, she sobbed with the helplessness and abandon of a badly spoiled child. Before her the setting sun made an orange smear, which gave a false illusion of heat, since already the chill of the Northern night was upon her, in the steaming over of the water and the graying of the rocks and the darkening of pine trees. Behind her was the log shack where Tommy lay unconscious. The only gay thing on the horizon, beside the girl herself—for Corinne, even in tears, was a pert, small figure—was the scarlet honeymoon canoe, which was drawn up on the rocks below.

On all the little still Canadian lake there was no sign of human life; since the morning when Tommy had been so strangely smitten there had been no faintest sign of life. There was not much chance of meeting human life up here, Corinne understood, unless other campers should chance to pass their way. She had done for Tommy everything that she could think of to do; not that Corinne, who had been used all her life to having every smallest detail attended to for her, had been able to think of much.

"In sickness and in health," she had promised not five brief days before. But it was not fair for him to test her like

this so soon, not fair for Tommy, who was strong enough to carry three her size, to bring her up here into the woods—the sort of wedding trip which she would have chosen last for herself—only to collapse on her, to throw upon her alone, in this utterly strange and terrifying country, the burden of his huge helplessness. Being subject to the recurrence of his tropical fever, he must have known the risk he ran. It was a wrong chance for him to take—wrong to her, Corinne insisted.

She tasted the salt of her own tears, and blinking down at the iron-red water of the lake, warm water, not freshly flowing, and with a muddy flavor to it, she longed passionately for one clear, cold glass of ice water. If only Tommy, who was burning up with the fever, could know the coldness of ice water! But at thought of Tommy burning up, Corinne's sobs petered out, and a deeper shuddering stirred her whole body. Tommy should not burn up; she would not let him burn up! In just a minute—as soon as she could think—

Meantime, she pressed her eyes shut against the hostile solitude. Why, the very name was hostile: "Snake-skin Lake." Corinne peeped, shivering, for the little gleaming, black water snakes. She saw a bird skimming the water with incredible swiftness. A loon, Tommy had taught her earlier, since only a loon could fly like that. Through her spread

fingers she followed the flight of the bird until it resolved itself into a black speck at the sunset end of the lake, a speck which was not a loon at all, but was some object moving steadily toward her!

The girl lifted herself on her knees and stared, unbelieving. She scrambled to her feet and shaded her eyes and stared, half hoping. The far flash of a paddle convinced her. Corinne rose on her toes and waved both hands and hallooed shrilly, hysterically. She danced a little and cried and hallooed again. There was no need, for the canoe had not swerved, but was moving toward her as steadily and inevitably as a Fate. Corinne pivoted and flashed to the cabin, tripping dangerously on the rocks in the litter on the floor beside the bunk where patent-leather slippers—absurd slippers for a camping trip, which had been a compromise and a joke between the two, and had furnished Tommy with an excuse to carry her over every rough portage.

The shack, an abandoned hunting lodge, was a poor enough place: beyond tiers of built-in bunks, a rusted-out stove, and a heavy, handmade sled, left by some winter visitor, there was only their own elaborate luggage, including very new duffel bags—Corinne had protested against Tommy's old hunting bags—gay new Hudson Bay blankets, the latest things in electric torches and camping kit, and Corinne's own shiny little week-end bag, beside her mandolin, whose light tinkle suited her voice. Corinne knelt in the pine litter on the floor beside the bunk where Tommy tossed; she ran half-shy fingers through the sandy bristle of his hair; then, again with that queer, deeper stirring within her, she took Tommy's hot, rough cheek against her bare throat.

"It's all right—all right. They're coming now."

"Not here—not here!" he fretted in delirium. "Must—get on—"

5—Ains.

It was odd how insistent he had been, in mapping out the stages of their journey, that they should not spend the night under the logical cover of the old cabin, but should go on beyond, to the open bush. Lucky for her, Corinne thought, that the sickness had seized him just here, with a roof over his head.

She went out again, collapsed in a little heap on the dock. The canoe, moving toward her, grew larger. There was a shape—or was it two shapes? She prayed that it would be men, two strong men, to carry him out of this wilderness. But no, the blur cleared to a single figure; now a sleek, black head emerged, and now two dark braids hung over either shoulder. A woman!

The canoe flowed alongside the dock, too silent almost for motion; the silver-gleaming paddle was at rest; and Corinne, sitting on her heels, found herself gazing down into the full, black eyes of an Indian girl. Her hair, in its two loose, oily braids—Corinne's fastidiousness shuddered against the oil—was bound around with a red fillet, and she wore a man's shirt, not clean, and an old bag of a black skirt. She was a child, much younger than Corinne, yet, even in that first measurement of her, Corinne recognized an odd maturity. There was fulfillment in the sag of the bosom beneath the soiled shirt, in the passivity of the olive face, in those full, liquid eyes—a fulfillment which the older woman lacked. The Indian girl's eyes had moved past Corinne, were traveling slowly up the path to the shack, were touching every detail of the little clearing with the deliberateness of a physical contact. Now fire showed through that fluid film of docility, and the eyes filled with a slow, strange bitterness, as a cup held still beneath a dark stream is filled with a dangerous liquid.

"You've come—you've come just in time! He's ill up there—my—my husband," stumbled Corinne. "I didn't

know anything to do. You can tell me, help me."

Still the Indian girl was silent; there was something sinister in the quality of her silence.

"He was hot all day yesterday and the day before," Corinne pleaded, twisting her new rings. "He must have known, but he wouldn't give up. You see, it's a malarial fever. He was in the tropics for over a year. This morning it caught him here. I must get him out, back to town, to a doctor——"

And then, since it fell quite flat, since the Indian girl was still brooding beyond her, Corinne began all over again, fought desperately for her attention:

"It caught him here, at the old hunting lodge. We were going three days farther up, to the big new hunting lodge."

"Huh?" Corinne had her at last, in the flash of the diamond on her third finger. If the Indian girl was a woman in her soft placidity and her fire, she was still a child in her wonder, in the clear contour of her cheek and the responsiveness of her mouth, and she followed the diamond's gleam with the naïve delight of a child. "New hunting lodge farther up?"

"Yes, yes." And Corinne went over it a third time, giving it to her slowly in the A B C of language. Was the girl stubborn, or merely stolid? Corinne could not tell. But when all her words left the creature sitting there unmoved, merely staring at the speaker with a bright and insolent curiosity, Corinne's new, thin patience snapped.

"You will help me; you've got to help!"

The Indian girl shook her head.

"Then why do you come here at all? Why do you come straight, and sit and gape at me like—like——"

The girl shrugged, but her mouth was no longer revealing, and the brush of her purple-black lashes concealed something in her eyes. She spoke softly,

wheedlingly, and even as she spoke her glance wandered to the shack.

"P'raps mebbe I come to trade, to trade basket for ol' clo'es, money, any'ting. See!" She dumped the contents of a gunny sack upon the dock before the other, and oval baskets and round baskets of sweet grass and porcupine quills, ornamented with stars and crescents, were rolled out before Corinne.

"I don't care anything about those!" Corinne, in her petulance, had brushed a basket into the lake, and both of them followed it as it washed away, the star of scarlet-stained porcupine quills on its top whirling merrily. "Can't I make you understand?" A man's civilization, Corinne had once read, was measured by the degree of his sympathy, of his ability to understand problems other than his own. Then this young animal was still in the savage state, since she could not even grasp a trouble which did not pertain directly to herself. How to pierce her?

"Look!" begged Corinne. "You are married?"

"Ah-hah," assented the other.

"Married long?"

"Married a year," indifferently.

"What is your name?"

"Winona; Nona, they call me."

"Well, then, Nona, I am married, too. I've been married—five days." Corinne forced her own eyes to meet the other's full, while the color crept under her fair skin; it was the naked appeal of one woman to another woman. "See, I can't—can't let him die, can I?"

"He marry you?" Her child's expression of open pity for the other was immediately covered and stiffened by something like a scum, which seemed to conceal a crafty, pointed jealousy. Corinne did not understand either the pity or the jealousy—the girl's moods were inexplicable to her—but she rose up against the hardening; she could not afford the hardening!

The Indian girl rose, too; and they stood there, the one balancing precariously on solid footing, the other balancing surely in her featherweight canoe. They made a strange contrast: Corinne in sports costume of dove gray with pert flashes of scarlet in her soft hat and the red tie at her throat and the capricious red Louis heels; and Winona in her short, sagging skirt, the braced legs beneath it firm, browned, bare, her feet encased in soiled moccasins. They were both slender, but the Indian girl's slenderness had fiber; and though her clothes hung baglike, one was conscious of the body beneath them, of muscles, firmness. She lacked the cleanliness of soap and water, but not that deeper cleanliness of unflabbiness.

"Please, please, Nona!" But now Corinne's gray eyes narrowed to an idea. She matched the Indian woman's stolid hardness with a sharper hardness of her own, that of the bargain hunting of her species. "Listen, I *will* trade with you after all! I'll match you for help with pretty things—such pretty things, Nona! You could help?"

But Winona had made a discovery; her mouth curved in a delighted grin; she pointed:

"Red shoe!"

"Those? Oh, they're nothing—I'll show you! But you *could* help me?" Corinne persisted. "Your husband, he's not far from here?"

"Peter not far," agreed Winona absently, her attention still engaged.

"Then wait! I'll show you!"

Corinne scrambled up the rocks to the log shack; feverishly she rifled the bulging week-end bag. Tommy's laughing concession to her feminine vanity on a trip where, as he had assured her, every ounce of weight counted. She stooped once to Tommy, and there was no lingering shyness now in her kiss, but only the fierceness of possession—a possession that was, in some shadowy way, threatened.

Back on the dock, kneeling, she dangled before Winona her plaid wool stockings, her Roman-striped silk bandanna, her blue-enamored vanity case, even her jade earrings—all those little fancies and whimsies which were the flavor of her, one by one she made a sacrificial heap of them. She was herself now, almost blithe in her assurance, as she hung baubles before the Indian girl, but she was an impertinence upon this wilderness setting; and Winona, who was as native as the trees, remained as wooden. Even the diamond solitaire, which Corinne added to the heap with a little wringing gesture, failed to dazzle the girl now. It was hopeless, quite hopeless. Corinne's buoyancy ebbed with the sunset, which grayed to the smoke of a fire that had burned itself out. She subsided; a sob lifted her throat.

"But why—why?"

"Because—— I tell you. It is white man; he come alone in the fall—corn moon. I am here alone, too; I wait for my brother, who goes far up by Nipissing. We both alone. He shoot deer, and I cook for him, here in this shack. We laugh much. Then one night he come to me in my tent; he is big man, strong man, and he tell me how pretty I am—how ver' pretty. It is two week mebbe, and then he go 'way. He laugh a lot, and he promise to come back, but he go 'way. I wait one year, two year; I marry Peter, but I wait——"

"But what has all this to do with me?"

Winona answered her with her still, deliberate stare.

And suddenly Corinne found herself unable to remove her gaze from those full, dark eyes, that revealing mouth. She was remembering Tommy's solitary hunting trips to the lodge in the fall of the year. Two years before the last trip must have occurred, since he had been in the tropics for nearly two years.

"When?" she managed. "How long ago?"

"Two year," Winona reiterated; "mos' two year I wait."

"Two years!" breathed Corinne. No, no! She recoiled from the suggestion, pulled herself together. "And so you hate all white men," she interpreted it, with a smile that jerked; "and because you hate them all, you will not help my—husband?"

"Perhaps mebbe if I see him, I help him," insinuated Winona, the movement of the muscles in her forearm betraying her clinching of the paddle she held. "You show him to me—your man?"

"No, no! Not now—not yet," Corinne stammered.

"What you call him—your man?" coaxed the other; there was no mistaking the pointed fire, the very real danger, behind her velvet softness.

"His name—his name—but it's not necessary that you should know his name." Corinne's dignity was the brittle shell of her usual high-headed arrogance. She rose uncertainly, teetered on her heels; she was unable to collect her emotions: anger, outraged pride, jealousy, hatred of Tommy, faith in Tommy, something shuddering to be born which was neither hatred nor faith, but was deeper than either of these. Mostly she felt stiff, unpliant through all the joints of her light, quick body, stiff to the very muscles of her lips. Tommy's shunning of this old cabin—his insistence that they push on beyond—

Through her own struggle, Corinne became aware of conflict in the other. Winona was again captivated by the bright heels, and the child in her warred with the woman.

"He—he liked red," smiled the Indian girl dreamily.

"All men like red, don't they?" countered Corinne, remembering Tommy's loud-spoken preference for that color.

Winona put out a finger and touched the red heels; she laughed softly, in pure delight. Corinne, instead of shrinking,

felt a little melting through her numbness.

"How old are you, Winona?"

"Eighteen."

"Eighteen! And you were—sixteen—two years ago."

"Sixteen," agreed Winona.

Still Corinne looked down at her, and did not know what she felt.

Winona raised the pleading eyes of a little girl:

"You give me red shoes. You let me see him once. Mebbe then I go 'way."

"If I give you these shoes—" The shoes were suddenly hateful to Corinne, but she had nothing else to wear, and she was not sure that she was ready to sell even her convenience for Tommy now. Besides, they had had a little joke about the slippers, she and Tommy, how they would be a relic for the grandchildren. "And if I take you into the cabin for one instant, you'll go then? And you'll send your husband back to paddle us down to the village at once, this very night?"

"I send Peter back," Winona nodded.

"But won't you do this for the red slippers alone? Without seeing—him?"

"I see him," Winona insisted.

"Come along, then." Corinne led her in a daze; all decision in her was suspended. What she would do next depended entirely upon what Winona revealed to her.

Tommy MacNab, in spite of the fever and a two days' stubble of beard, was good looking in a big, square, vital way; almost too handsome. His hair was sandy, with more red than gold in it, in its color and its coarseness almost like the hair of a big red buck.

The Indian girl stood, feet apart, lightly balancing, staring down at him. Corinne stood waiting, watching her face for the recognition. But there was nothing—only the goiterlike thickness, that stolidity. It was all right, all right. Corinne felt the blood moving in her veins again, knew the weakness

of relief. She was proud of Tommy and humble before him; she had an impulse to put her arm about Winona. Poor Winona.

Until something stirred there, the fire burning through, and suddenly Winona was hating him with a savage passion. Her hatred included Corinne, who cowered before her, and went back again to Tommy. There was fiber in it, in the tautening of her body, like the backward pull on the fibrous string of a bow, before the arrow is shot; and there was danger in it to Tommy, sprawled there helpless, and to Corinne herself—the sharp peril of the pointed arrow before it is let fly.

Tommy screwed his heavy shoulders deeper into the blankets, moaned. Slowly Winona changed; her flaccid mouth sagged; her whole body sagged to the floor. She knelt, in the exact spot where Corinne had knelt, in the pine litter; she ran exploring fingers through Tommy's hair, with that same movement of exquisite shyness which had been Corinne's. Corinne, in that moment, was aware only of the smell of pine—everywhere that poignant pine smell, which held a deeper cleanliness than she would ever achieve, and which always after that she hated.

Now the Indian girl had gathered his head to her heart as though it belonged there. So that was it! Corinne herself flamed; a thousand little flames pricked through her numbness. She registered one last petulant, little-girl protest: It was not fair, not fair! Then her fingers closed on Winona's wrist; she stood between Winona and Tommy, defiant.

"No!" she said. "No! You hear?" She knew now that she hated this girl, along with any one who would come between her and her husband. But she curbed her hatred, met the girl's eyes with the level coldness of a grown-up who disciplines a child. "No," she reiterated with finality.

"But look!" She sought distraction for Winona, glanced down at those cunning little red heels, proud heels, as though they were strangers to her. She stooped, removed one shoe with the expertness of a girl who changes frequently to dancing pumps, and balanced it on the palm of her hand so that the red heel showed. Her little fair, pointed face took on the shrewd cunning of those earlier traders who bartered beads for lands, intensified, even, since they were men who drove the first bargains, while she was a woman in her own sphere. "See, Winona! You like it? You may have it. Try them on! Here are stockings—silk."

The Indian girl crowded her feet into the slippers, laughed, while Corinne slid into the large, soiled moccasins, her skin shrinking from the contact. With the transfer, Winona seemed to exchange slow stolidity for Corinne's own vivacity. She paddled off with nervous, quick strokes, smiling down at the one foot stretched before her.

"You'll not forget?" called Corinne.
"I no forget."

Corinne scurried back to the cabin, there to wait, with adult patience, for the promised help. She was too thoroughly steeped now in this new awareness of Tommy—a consciousness which held resignation and shame, which made a humming through her body, and which went so deep that it was almost a pain—to be more than superficially aware of Peter's arrival. But when Tommy turned in his fever, and murmured "Nona," she was quick to muffle the name from Peter's hearing, and to hush him.

Twelve hours later, back in the French-Canadian village, in the best bedroom of the little frame hotel, Corinne heard the favorable verdict of a red-faced Doctor McGregor, and then asked for water for a foot bath and for shoes of some kind.

"I'll send for Felice; Felice'll fix you," said McGregor. "Humph, that knocking will be your Indian, eh?"

"Wait," shuddered Corinne. "Will you—thank him for me and give him this bill?"

"Damn-fool squaw of his," grumbled the old Scotchman, shutting the door upon Peter after words unintelligible to Corinne. "She takes to French heels, and breaks a leg, and he asks me how to set it."

"Winona? But he didn't mention it, didn't say a word—"

"As if I could tell him how to set a leg! And it's a day's journey back into

the woods, breaking your neck every hour of the way. But here's Felice."

Corinne lifted her head, returned a shy smile. Suddenly her smile cooled, her eyes narrowed, and she dragged herself up and came to stand in front of Tommy. For Tommy lay with his face toward Felice, and Felice had found him with a concentration of that shy, soft interest, and Tommy's eyes, if he should open them, would rest directly upon her. Felice was young, a child, and she was pretty, with a red bloom beneath her dark skin, and a red ribbon at her throat. Corinne, staring at her, hated her, and was afraid.



MILADY'S MAID

WHENAS milady goes to court
 Her gown is crimson silk;
 The three white plumes upon her head
 Are whiter than new milk.
 So tightly is her bodice laced
 The whalebone bends and creaks,
 And when she dons her satin shoes
 Oh, then milady shrieks!

I stain my fingers with her rouge;
 I bruise them with her hooks;
 I hold the mirror high and low
 The while she scolds and looks.
 My lord is storming in the hall
 For Fred, the footman's, sport
 Before milady, puffed and curled,
 Is on her way to court.

Oh, then I give the glass a treat,
 For all my cotton gown,
 For I am slim where she is thick,
 And white where she is brown.
 I toss my curls, I tilt my head,
 And wonder for a trice
 Exactly what a king would think
 Who saw me curtsey thrice!

THEODOSIA GARRISON.



The Perpetual Fiancé

By Stewart M. Emery

Author of "At the End of Three Years"



WHEN Herbie Hetherington relapsed into the upholstery of the lounge beside me in the club window he was a picture of deep-dyed gloom, relieved on the fringes by white spats and a neat, new wanghee stick. He just sat there, trying to pull the end of his little spiked moustache down to where he could bite it, and looking like something somebody had thought up for a masquerade. Every so often the plow of thought ran a furrow across his forehead, making him wriggle. There was nothing to do but to try to comfort the fellow.

"You been to the dentist, Herbie?" I asked him in a voice of proper kindness. "Rough chaps, those jaw-jammers. They put a rubber thing in your mouth and go over and talk baseball in the next office."

"No," mourned Herbie. "Not dentists."

"Ah!" poked on the good Milliken—which is myself. "I know what it is. Somebody has unscrewed the well-known bottom from the market again this morning. Just let out the old Bowles-Boyce to the nearest taxi stand and pig it a couple of weeks, and you'll be fit and financial again. It's remarkable how much money you'll have if you charge everything to the club. Nobody ever pays the club."

I roved an eye about our black-leatherish and oak-paneled premises.

They could stand quite a bit of hanging up on current accounts before they gave signs of tottering. Herbie and I had the main room and its incomparable view of the population going to work along the avenue all to ourselves, with the exception of a couple of elderly members who were off in corners reading back files of the by-laws, or something like that, while waiting for rigor mortis to set in.

Herbie gnashed a tooth.

"No," he grieved. "Not market."

This was not getting anywhere. Our Herbie's usually engaging blue eye was clouded, and his bright face had lost its morning luster. I laid the helping hand on his knee.

"Come, come, Herbie. Tell your friend Milliken. Is it something they can send you to the chair for?"

"Wish they could."

"Oh, but now, Herbie!"

"It's love."

Both of the venerable members slunk out of the room in intense disapproval while pocketing their reading glasses. Milliken, I fear, may have disturbed them.

"You needn't get so guffawish," accused Herbie, annoying the other end of his moustache. "Want to ruin the only decent, quiet place in New York? Can't eat. Can't sleep. Not so funny, my gad! Told you last month, didn't I, that I was engaged to Audrey Lane?"

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Nothing public, of course, but there we are just the same. Ah!" he proceeded, the first glimmer of enthusiasm lighting up his countenance, "there's a wonderful girl for you, Milliken, wonderful! Soulful eyes, raven's-wing hair, mad about poetry. She's a girl in a thousand!"

I agreed, recalling the thrilling accents of Audrey when enmeshed in the better bits of Browning.

"Ha, ha—I'd do some simmering myself if I had a fiancée looking over Paris for three months. A whole cruel ocean away from the loved one, eh, Herbie? Muster a smile, you lucky fellow, there's a European mail in this afternoon."

Herbie's tone became that of a grave-digger expecting rain.

"Don't want mail. Had a letter from Audrey last week. Started the whole trouble. Listen, Milliken. Audrey has a cousin, from Ohio or Tennessee or some one of those Middle Western States, going over to join her in Paris. She wrote me to sort of look out for the kid while she's in town. Been with her night and day. Little Pat Swords, Milliken," he burst out fervidly, "there's one of the most delightful creatures in the world! Blond as—oh, blond as October corn, and what a pep to her! Fairly makes your brain turn hand-springs."

This was more like the old Herbie. His hands were beginning to wave and his little moustache to show signs of bristling. When our Herbie was going well none of us around the club could touch the man. He fairly oozed vivacity, good cheer, and an inimitable and winsome winningness. Then something seemed to strike him in midvest and he crumpled.

"Last night," he muttered hoarsely, "I took Pat to the Meeting Place. They had a lot of brass jazz instruments there. Brass jazz instruments always get me all worked up. She was radiant;

she was glorious; she was divine. Then they let off those damned brass things and it was all over with me. I told her I loved her over a supper check for thirty-two seventy. Now I'm engaged to her, too."

Milliken felt oddly. The lounge upon which he was sitting appeared to buck somewhat.

"Ho! Ah!" I interrupted most lucidly. "On with the new. Off with the old."

"Nothing of the sort," cried Herbie. "I love Audrey. She's a wonderful girl. Wouldn't give her up for the world. Pat and I are keeping our engagement very dark. Oh, very dark. I've always kept my engagements dark. But, Milliken, what's going to happen when I patter into Paris the end of the month on that silly business for the firm and meet the two of 'em together in one apartment?"

He got up and commenced to wear out the carpet.

"Must be a way out of this, Milliken. Been in worse jams lots of times. Let me think."

Herbie did it in a practiced way. He tapped the crook of his wanghee stick ruminantly against his teeth. He twirled it. He made passes with it at all the ash trays within range and knocked them off the tables. But in the end he gave me the dull, dead eye.

"It's no go, Milliken. I'm not Houdini. I guess my vice has got me at last."

I thought the fellow failed to make sense and so informed him. Herbie settled himself on the lounge in the most confidential manner. Cautiously he looked about the room, but we were alone. None the less he lowered his voice to a whisper.

"It's this getting engaged, Milliken, old boy. Every man has a pet weakness of some kind. With some men it's drinking. Others can't stop gambling. I'm always getting engaged to

girls. Never was a time I can remember when I wasn't engaged to one. Sometimes more. Life's a frightful desert to me if I'm not engaged to a girl. Sort of gives zest and sparkle to things. Get me out with a girl more than five or six times and I'm gone. All kinds of words come popping out of me. The first thing I know I've proposed. Damn it, Milliken, they always accept me."

Maybe they did—yes, maybe they did. As I have said, no one for sheer winningness could touch our Herbie. There was an hypnotic buoyancy about him, a reckless debonairness that the white spats and wanghee stick accentuated splendidly. There is always walking around some fortunate fellow for whom all the women fall. No further explanation is necessary. Here was our Herbie, and he was it.

"I love 'em," went on Herbie plaintively. "The little dears. I swear I've loved every girl I've ever been engaged to. I love Audrey and I love Pat. Love 'em to distraction. Doesn't seem to be any bounds to the thing. I guess I'm a Mormon." Just beyond the window a delightful specimen of openwork silk hosiery went by attached to a milliner's young lady, and the spark of life brightened the man's eye. "What say you have tea with Pat and myself this afternoon? I want you to meet her, Milliken, and see for yourself I'm not to blame. It's fate. She'll knock your eye out."

I promised him I'd be there—but late. "I'm stopping in to see Eleanor Post about five," I explained quite casually.

"Good old Norrie!" cried Herbie. "There's a girl for you! There's something about these open-air girls that none of your hothouse lilies of the valley can touch. Been the best of pals with Norrie for years. Once—well, you give her my compliments anyhow. Haven't been to see her for a week. Ah!"

The little Mormon had commenced to be positively annoying. It hardly seemed right that every woman in the world should fall for his bright, candid face. But Milliken was in the best of humor and his newest lounge suit when Norrie Post opened her door.

"Come straight in, but mind the trunks, Tony. You've walked right into a hurry call for Europe." Most evidently I had. The living room was a wilderness of boxes and things, about and through which Norrie gracefully strode. "I've just decided to run across to Paris," she smiled gayly. Norrie, the old darling, was always doing everything on the spur of the moment, from taking six-foot gates to smashing a mean backhand down your alley. "Audrey Lane's cabled she's having a perfectly hectic time and wants me to join her. So here I am on the way. You'll find the hammer and nails over there, Tony. Be a dear and put the lids on these boxes."

"Audrey Lane?" I inquired reminiscently while wielding the sledge. "Herbie Hetherington and I were just talking about her this morning. What news from Audrey?"

"She's having just a circus with real French poets and the most interesting people." Whereupon Norrie cupped her chin in her hand and examined me far too intently. "You're Herbie's friend, aren't you? Tell me, is he as wild as ever?"

I had a distinct recollection of our Herbie tooling a horrible hansom up to the portal of the club two nights previously, with the driver smoking a pipe in the interior where our Herbie should have been. Herbie had called the club steward out and demanded a bag of oats for his horse. He had wept bitter tears on learning that there were no oats in the club. But we men stick together. I assured Norrie that Herbie's conduct had been exemplary over a prolonged period.

"I never saw a man take such a brace," I added for good measure. "He's been the most settled chap in the club."

"For how long?" inquired Norrie. "Would you say—about a year?"

"Yes, about a year." I would have made it two or three just as willingly.

"Dear Herbie," mused Norrie, nodding her brown head. "Now that big black strap goes around the little wardrobe trunk. You wind it twice and then you pull it tight." It was my original impression that I had come to Norrie's for a bit of chatty tête-a-tête, but she was mistaking Milliken for a stevedore.

"You'll write me from Paris?" I besought as I left with a rent in one sleeve and a black-and-blue thumb, but bearing both bravely. "We mustn't lose track of each other."

Norrie smiled her friendliest, patting me on the arm that had the tear.

"Of course I will, Tony."

Milliken became boldness itself.

"For twenty-five cents," I said, "I would follow you there."

Sweetly but finally Norrie closed the door. A taxicab thrust me forth at the Hotel Regal. On a divan in the corner of the tea lounge sat Herbie and a charming twenty-year-old with a dazzling combination of ash-blond hair and brown eyes. They had a dim red lamp on their table and the waiter had been tipped to stay away. Their happiness was complete.

"Fit in and snap at a bit of toast," our Herbie bade me. "Pat, this is good old Milliken."

Miss Patricia Swords flashed her flirtatious gaze upon me.

"You look so nice I could kiss you. But that would make my Herbie mad with his little Pat."

They squeezed each other's hands openly and their eyes shouted love messages. Gone was the gloom which had enwrapped our Herbie in the club. He

commenced to radiate. He expanded like a gardenia in the sun. He began to believe the things he was saying himself. He almost had me convinced that he was a wonderful fellow. Half the women in the place were looking across at him with yearning eyes, and their escorts were beginning to growl nastily.

Milliken was relieved when we found ourselves out by the elevator. Somewhere since morning Herbie had acquired a new white felt hat, which he wore dashingly canted over one eye, while he twirled his wanghee stick. Mine were the only dry orbs among the three of us when we put Pat into the lift.

"Good-by, good-by, until to-morrow," gulped Herbie, clinging to her hand.

"It'll seem ages," consoled his twenty-year-old. "You're the cutest fiancée."

A most brutal elevator man interrupted at this moment.

"Leggo the lady," he remarked. "I gotta run me squirrel cage up."

With a slight moan Herbie released his lady love and she was whisked roofward.

"Can't bear to let the beauty out of my sight an instant," he moaned. "Perfect brute of an All-American full back is camping on her trail. He's got her for the rest of the evening. What d'y'e spose she sees in a lot of thick shoulders? Milliken, isn't she the greatest little girl in the world?"

He cheered rapidly on being assured that Miss Patricia Swords would pass at a mass meeting if the hall were well filled. We found our way back to the club for dinner during which Herbie upset his soup in order to scamper out and reserve us tickets for the latest musical comedy for tired business men.

"It's full of girls, Milliken. Need an eyeful of 'em to-night to keep my mind off my worries."

From the vantage of the front row Herbie observed the cascade of frillies and limbs with the bright eye of a con-

noisseur. When the purple spotlight played upon a delightful young thing immediately before us Herbie commenced to bounce about in his seat.

"She's warbling at me, Milliken. My gad, what a face! What a figure! Got dimples in her knees just like Desirée Derode of the Folies Bergères. Yes, like Desirée. Most dashing girl I ever met, Milliken. Last time I was in Paris she and I——"

At this critical point I was forced to hold our little ball of fire in his place. The charming lady who twinkled in the footlights was darting the sweetest of glances into his soul, trilling the while:

"You're my darling littul babe;
You're my littul sweetheart bo-oy."

Frantically as the curtain fell our Herbie began to scribble on his visiting card. It came back to us in the palm of an usher in the middle of the next act.

"Oh, damn," burst out Herbie. "She says she's married and in love with her husband. Why isn't she home washing the dishes then? Let's get out of this dead show, Milliken."

The grill room of the club was cool and calming. It always is. We had hardly settled ourselves before one of the staff handed Herbie a letter that had come by special messenger. Milliken would have torn with avid fingers at its envelope, recognizing the firm, square handwriting of Norrie Post, but not so Herbie who dallied and perused. The man's mouth remained open like that of a carp posing for a motion picture news weekly.

"My heavens! Milliken!"

"Something quick and stiff for Mr. Hetherington," I cried to Thomas, the faithful grill room attendant. Thomas is our pride and resembles nothing so much as a bishop temporarily out of employment. He knows our secrets and he brings us up cooling things in the morning. "He has had a shock."

"Shock l!" groaned Herbie. "I've been

dynamited! Milk with ice in it, Thomas. Need to keep a cool head to-night." His eye flitted haggardly about. "Listen, Milliken. It was at the Louisville Derby last year. The moon was out and Norrie and I were on the terrace at the country club. Always been crazy about her. Told her so. What else could I do? You always propose to the girl you take in to dinner Derby Day. She said I was too wild. Told me if I'd settle down for a year she might consider me seriously. Nothing for me as a gentleman to do but take her up on it. Then I forgot all about it. Now she writes she has it on the best authority I'm a changed man and she's proud of me."

At this juncture in the narrative Milliken commenced to kick his own shin with great vigor. There are times when we men should not stick together quite so closely.

"She's taken me, Milliken. That makes three of the most wonderful girls in the world I'm engaged to. No man living deserves my luck."

"Ah, yes," I observed, watching the little Mormon attentively. "And Norrie is off to Paris next week to stay with Audrey and the charming Pat. It is, I agree, most thoughtless of her. Three fiancées of the same man in one apartment sounds to me a bit like overcrowding."

Our Herbie spilled his milk all over himself. I draw a veil around his agony.

"There's only one thing to do," he muttered hoarsely when he was more or less himself again. "You've got to come to Paris with me and pull me out of this. You owe it to me, you do. Guess it was you, wasn't it, wished this last engagement on me? I'll pay all expenses. I'll make you my lawyer. You practiced once before that aunt of yours with the glass eye left you all her money. I'll need a lawyer and a doctor and a chief of police in this business. Three of 'em—my gad—three of 'em all liv-

ing together for me to face. Never had it happen before. Never want to have it happen again. Milliken, good old Milliken, you won't go back on me?"

No one could have resisted the pleading in the man's face. I pressed his quivering palm.

"Count on Milliken," I told him in my best manner. Something like the peace that passes understanding descended upon our Herbie's features. Palpably he was about to give the demon care the gate.

"I will," he cried. "I'll leave it all to you."

The last I saw of Herbie that night he had the faithful Thomas by the top button of his jacket.

"Thomas," he was inquiring brightly, "tell me, man to man. What would you do if you were engaged to three different girls at once?"

Thomas became hoarsely confidential.

"I was married to two on 'em at the same time, sir. I left Hengland."

Herbie caroled. Herbie sang. Joyously he reached for the pink piece of soap provided by the management of the Hotel Armand-Noyon for the especial use of opulent visitors. About him in the tub water was rising in which he sported like a trained seal, glee upon his bright face. It was morning three weeks later in Paris.

"Tum-tiddly-ay, tum-tiddly-ay, tum-tiddle, tum-tiddle, hi-ho!" emerged from him. "Young and in Paris, Milliken! D'yoo see that girl with the diamonds in her hair at the table next to us last night?"

"In the capacity of your counsel," I told him in my very best legal manner, "I would suggest that you keep your winkers closed around this village until a certain pressing matter having to do with the Hetherington affections has been wound up. Caveat, Herbie." The man was too merry, too gay thus early in the day, and suspicions commenced

to roil around in the gray matter. "What did you do last night after I went to bed?"

"You mean after they carried you upstairs?" inquired our Herbie blithely. "Ah, good old Milliken, that's the question. What did I do? Went touring from to to fro. Always tour Paris from to to fro the first night. Never saw so many beautiful women. Perfect haze of 'em. God bless Paris."

He commenced to burrow about in the flood. Presently he popped his head out of the water.

"Called my fiancées up the first thing when I bounced out of bed. Talked to 'em one after the other—Audrey, Pat and Norrie, in the order of our engagement. I guess that's showing no favoritism. Milliken, they're three of the finest girls in the world. I love 'em all. I'm proud to call 'em mine. Each and every one sounded so sweet on the wire I know everything's all right up to now. They've all kept it dark, the dears. Why fret the brow on a bright day like this?"

He began to plash his cheeriest just as a knocking sounded on the door of the apartment.

"What-ho the gate, Milliken. If it's a waiter, order me a real boulevard breakfast."

It was, however, not the waiter. The most flourishing bow I have ever received greeted me on our threshold from a gentleman of France. His silk hat glistened; his frock coat gloved his form; his lavender gloves shone. Something large in pasteboard came my way.

"Be'old, my card. 'Ave I ze plaisir of addressing Monsieur 'Erbert 'Etherington?"

"Monsieur Hetherington is importantly engaged." It did not seem necessary to mention that it was with a pink piece of soap. "Won't you walk in and wait?"

There was a terrible twirling of moustaches.

"Zat I will," said our morning visitor. "I am prepaire to wait ze long time for Monsieur 'Etherington. You are 'is friend?"

Milliken took a peek at the billboard.

"I have that honor. His friend and, like yourself, Monsieur Napoleon Chericourt, a lawyer."

"Ah, it is that you are Monsieur 'Etherington's lawyaire, 'is avocat? Zen I will to ze business wizout delay." The gallant Monsieur Napoleon stiffened like a ramrod and his eye gleamed. "Monsieur, I 'ave ze honaire of waiting on you wiz ze breach of promise suit of my client Mademoiselle Desirée Derode, ze famous beautee, against Monsieur 'Erbert Etherington."

A lavender-covered palm thumped our table.

"Grossly 'ave Monsieur 'Etherington outrage ze feeling of my client. 'E 'ave stole 'er 'eart—ze tendaire 'eart of ze française, monsieur—and 'e 'ave go away back to *Amerique*. She weep, bon dieu, 'ow she weep," proceeded this splendid Napoleon fellow, touching the cambric to his streaming eyes. "For ze weary months she weep, thinking 'e will nevaira r-return. And now zat 'e is r-return ze justice will be done. Five 'undred t'ousand frances my client ask for ze broken 'eart. She is vairy r-reasonable woman."

Monsieur Napoleon still quivered in the throes of sympathy over the devastated heart when I crashed in on our Herbie.

"Desirée Derode?" he inquired jauntily. "Ah, she's a wonderful girl. Found her last night at the Café Rondanda with a butterfly painted on her back and went up and slapped it. She remembered me right away. Told you, didn't I, she and I were engaged when I was over here last fall? Those were the happy days. My gad, Milliken, it takes a Parisienne to know how to love."

Milliken, the lawyer, interrupted this flow with professional sternness.

"Did you write any letters? Anything she could produce in court?"

"Stacks of 'em," chirped Herbie. "High as the Eiffel Tower. Five or six a day fairly burning with the old passion. Called her my little honeydew melon and my liquid-eyed gazelle and all that sort of stuff. Steam and zip all through 'em. Wonderful reading they'd make at a trial. Now she wants to sue me for five hundred thousand francs in funny French money, what? I'm proud of her. That just shows she still loves me."

The little Mormon beamed. Paris had gone to his head.

"Toddle back to the legal confrère, Milliken. Watch Herbie walk to freedom yet."

Monsieur Napoleon was once more the punctilious man of law. From his breast pocket he produced a nasty-looking batch of papers. It was evident that by now he felt himself the defender of the womanhood of all Gaul.

"Ze French courts zey are no so tendaire on ze foreigners," he remarked ominously. "Perhaps Monsieur 'Etherington 'e do not desire to go to ze jail?"

The tactful reply of Milliken was drowned out by the commencement of an odd noise. It sounded like "Tum-tiddly-ay, tum-tiddly-ay, tum-tiddle, tum-tiddle." It was. Our Herbie was wandering into the sitting room in a pair of bright purple pajamas and a straw hat. He wore a monocle in his eye and carried his neat wanghee.

"Where is my keeper?" he demanded plaintively. "Milliken, are you my keeper?"

"I am," said Milliken firmly. Herbie seated himself cross-legged on the carpet and began to wiggle his toes.

"I want to go fish," he pleaded.

Monsieur Napoleon regarded him with popping eyeballs.

"Ze man—'e is crazee?"

"All my nurse's fault," mourned Herbie. "She dropped me on my head

when I was young. Are you Santa Claus?"

Trust Milliken to say the right word at the right time.

"Quiet, absolutely quiet," I warned Napoleon, the nervous. "He has been this way for a long time."

With a charming and childlike curiosity Herbie watched the waiter bear in the breakfast tray. Then he leaped up, clapping his hands.

"I'll show you a trick. Oh, such a splendid trick. Hand Herbie your tick-tick and your silk hat. Gimme."

Shuddering slightly, Monsieur Napoleon obeyed. Almost immediately he unloosed a despairing bleat. In the most innocent way Herbie had brought a shoe-tree down on Monsieur Napoleon's gold repeater, reducing it to ruins which he trickled into the hat. Our Herbie put his finger to his lips with a smile of arch cunning.

"S-sh, everybody. Mustn't spoil the pretty trick." Whereupon he dropped four eggs of the soft-boiled character from the breakfast tray into the hat, and stirred triumphantly with the end of his cane. A slow sloshing arose. After a minute of this he whipped a handkerchief over the hat.

"Hokis, pokis, malokis, change! Brek-kek-koax-koax-koax—Yale!"

The strangest, most perturbed sort of expression dawned on Herbie's face as he looked again into the depths of Monsieur Napoleon's silken headpiece. Abruptly he handed it back to him.

"It won't work," he said grievedly. "It ought to turn out a new watch and an omelette. But it doesn't seem to."

I thought our Herbie was going to cry with disappointment. His bright little face was fairly brimming with dolor, regarding Monsieur Napoleon, a distinguished but slightly berserk Frenchman. As Monsieur Napoleon gazed into his hat the soft sloshing once more was to be heard in its interior.

"He is ze madman! He is danger-

ous to be loose! I s'all tell my client he is ze loon craze! *Sacré nom d'un poisson bleu*, my 'at! Keep 'im away from me! Take him back to *l'Amérique* by ze next boat or I s'all do 'im a damage! Ee-diot! *Cochon!* *Cochon!* *Cochon!*"

"Coachman yourself," chirped Herbie with rising spirit. "Taxi chauffeur! Truck driver!"

Through the door Monsieur Napoleon Chericourt, avocat, plunged in a flutter of coat tails amid a violent grating of the upper and lower teeth.

"Herbie," I said to the man frankly, "tell the truth to Milliken now. I want to be prepared. How many fiancées have you got in Europe?"

"Not more than five or six," computed Herbie after a moment of thought. "But they'll none of 'em bother us. Just a bit of chance my running into dear old Desirée. Milliken, that girl's a pippin! Don't know but I love her still now I think of it."

He left me after luncheon, whacking his wanghee down the boulevard. Half a dozen times before he became lost in the colorful crowd streaming along the pavement I saw him raise his panama to charming faces that appeared to him to be worth while. At the apéritif hour he fell into a seat beside me under the gay awning of the *Café de la Paix*, his little face aglow.

"*Vermouth cassis*," he cried cheerily to the garçon. Nothing like a *vermouth cassis* after a good afternoon's work. Milliken, old man, I've asked Audrey and Norrie and Pat to have luncheon with us to-morrow. Can't keep away from 'em another day. Fairly burning up with longing. Hey, what're you getting up for? I've just sat down."

"Herbie," I counseled sagely, "do you realize the *Café de la Paix* is one of the five locations in the world that everybody passes at least once in their lives? We'll find another spot just as good. If we stay here, some more fiancées you know are sure to come along."

They were three beautiful girls. Never had they looked more entrancing than when they descended upon us in the green-trellised court of the Hotel Armand-Noyon, a trio of divinities frocked and hatted as only American girls in Paris can frock and hat themselves. Our Herbie's bosom swelled with pride. He would have none other than the head waiter to minister to us.

Deeply and languorously the little Mormon gazed into the romantic orbs of Audrey as he escorted her to her chair.

"Your eyes are wells of midnight," he whispered. "I adore you."

At this moment Norrie's vanity case slipped from her wrist and chivalrously Herbie bent to retrieve it.

"Angel," he said in a low, thrilling voice. "You've made me a better man. I love you for it."

"I want a cocktail," announced Miss Patricia Swords. "They have the cutest kick here."

"We'll drink to our happiness," murmured Herbie in her shell-like ear. "Darling little pal."

"Only you, Herbert, could have thought to send me that little volume of verse," said Audrey, raising the wells of midnight soulfully to his. "Poetry is so lovely in vellum."

"My sport scarf is just wonderful," smiled Norrie trustfully.

"I'm wearing the violets little Herbie sent Pat this morning," put in the twenty-year-old with a charmingly proprietary air. "Aren't you good to all of use, though?"

"Big-hearted Herbie—that's me," announced the little Mormon, basking happily in the glow of his triple love. He began to order things off the deep end of the menu to back up this statement. By the time he was through the head-waiter was genuflecting himself off, perhaps seeking a motor truck to deliver all Herbie had ordered for us. The man was becoming intoxicated on af-

fection. His love leaped to his eyes whenever the glances of Audrey or Pat or Norrie met his. The scene was one of gayety and pleasure.

Presently it commenced to dawn on Milliken that an oddly assorted pair at a table within hearing were regarding our merry party with undisguised interest. One of them wore a wild and rolling eye and a loosely looped tie, which he flapped while pouring conversational torrents into the ears of his companion, a monumental youth whose bright hat-band denoted a college education. Right now he was taking a course in thin-stemmed glasses.

"It's Pierre Valvou and that Filbert boy," whispered Norrie. "Pierre is the poet who wrote that dear little ode to Audrey in last week's *Journal des Arts*. The Filbert boy has followed Pat all the way over from New York. He's the greatest full back Harvard ever had. Isn't it perfectly thrilling?"

I agreed. What I had thought to be merely interested glances on their part were now turning out to be daggers and straight-arm jolts. But Milliken filed them for future reference.

"And who do you think is following you about over raging seas and high-priced continents?" I demanded on the spur of the moment. The old heart beat loudly

"Herbie Hetherington, of course," Norrie rebuked me. "Hasn't he told you we're engaged? Herbie is a dear now he's braced up so. I'm the only girl he ever really loved."

By cocking an ear I could hear Herbie's passionate tones quoting to Audrey something neat about wishing his tongue could utter the thoughts that arose in him. Pale hands he loved beside the Shalimar followed next. In a rapidly snatched moment he gazed longingly into Pat's face as though it were the light of his life, his little spiked moustache quivering with emotion. Milliken was reminded of a merry bee,

buzzing from flower to flower. And then from nowhere at all there drifted in the vision.

She did not have much on but what there was of it was in perfect taste: a wide black hat with plumes and a bit of gauzy cloth, as I recall. Her eyes were deliciously blue; she undulated rather than walked down upon us. She was so French that it was positively appalling. I saw Herbie's little jaw drop.

"Ah, 'Erbert, mon petit 'Erbert," greeted the vision, languishing upon him, "you have ze bad head. I am so sorree."

"Go away. G-go away," bleated our Herbie.

"Only zis morning Monsieur Cherictourt inform me. Is it ze love for me zat have made ze head go off? Ah, 'Erbert, we have love each other sublime, glorious, have we not?"

Mademoiselle Desirée Derode swept our small but congenial assembly with her sweet glance and put her hand on Herbie's brow. A long course of the Folies Bergères, it seems, renders one prone to act upon impulse in public. Or maybe she just had a heart of gold.

"We are all ze friends, n'est-ce past? My 'Erbie and I we have plight our troth so beautiful. Zen my 'Erbie run away from me. Now he have ze head so bad ze law suit is no more good. Mon dieu, but I grieve for my poor 'Erbie."

Monsieur Napoleon himself, twisting a mean moustache, appeared beside her. He glared upon a wilting Herbie.

"Lunatic! So you are yet on ze loose, hein?" The lavender semaphores began to wave. "Enjoy yourself mos' magnifique while ze sun shines."

"How dare you say anything like that," spoke up Audrey, her eyes darkly mournful, "when he is engaged to—"

"Ee-diot!"

"To me."

"To me!"

"To me!"

Three beautiful girls regarded each other in total amaze. Who shall blame them? Milliken with feverish hand rattled all the table silver within reach. There are times when any sort of vulgar clattering noise is a relief. But this noble effort seemed of no avail.

"Herbie!" they exclaimed in one voice, their loving eyes wide.

Our Herbie tottered to his feet.

"I leave it all to Milliken," he said plaintively. "He's my lawyer. Good old Milliken."

It was a moment for sagacious speech. Unfortunate there was nothing to say.

"*Il est parti,*" lamented Desirée. "My 'Erbie have gone in ze great hurree."

Which was quite true. White spats were twinkling briskly up a terrace and out a door leading to the safe streets of Paris, where only hooting motor busses, rocketing taxicabs and apaches with strangle cords lay in wait. The head waiter, sensing something agley, came hastening with the check while there should yet be some one lucid to hand it to. I forged Herbie's name to it.

"Come girls," I said with much dignity. "Follow Milliken."

We left the lovely Desirée. She had, it appeared, further words to say about the great love of 'Erbie and herself. The motor in which we departed from there had, as I recall, much of the blank, hushed atmosphere of a hearse. Such remarks as were made were not distinguished for their light-hearted spontaneity.

"Poor, poor Audrey," I whispered to Norrie. "Her romance is blighted. Poor, poor Pat! She has lost her fiancé. Poor, poor Norrie!" Here I pressed her hand, of course merely in a legal way. "It is a terrible blow to the affections."

"Perfectly terrible," mourned Norrie, continuing to watch the crowds on the boulevards out of her window.

"My life is ruined," murmured Audrey. "Who has my lipstick?"

"It was a dumb bunny's trick," contributed Miss Patricia Swords.

I parted from them, suspiciously sweet to each other, at Audrey's door. Milliken has never inquired what went on behind that door after he left.

As my motor rolled back to the old caravansary I noted, advancing along the pavement, a young man with a wild eye and one with the shoulders of an All-American full back. They seemed in eager search of some one in the crowd wearing white spats and a wanghee stick. Their young faces burned with the high resolve of the crusader. It was well, I pondered, that our little Mormon was now safely ensconced in some dim and obscure café waiting for night to fall.

About three hours later Herbie strolled into the hotel, once again the dapper young American. He had freshened himself up with a chrysanthemum and the end of an expensive new green silk handkerchief lolled from his sleeve, making his morale ever so much better. He patted me on the arm with his stick.

"Well, good old Milliken, what's to report? Just been to the greatest musi-girl matinée in Paris. Seemed a nice cave to dive into till the storm blew over. My gad, but the legs were superb!"

"Let them make you happy," I soothed him. "Be very happy about them while you may. To-morrow at four we shall pay a formal call on your fiancées in bulk. That is what your lawyer has arranged for you, Herbie."

Herbie's little jaw made odd motions.

"Face 'em all together, Milliken? Rather crawl into a den of lions with a tray of raw chops. Can't they wait a couple of months or so?"

"No," I instructed the man firmly. "We shall strike while the iron is still hot. The best way is the cheapest in

—Ains.

the long run. To-night I shall let you dictate your will to me at no extra charge. Milliken is your friend."

None the less our Herbie's bright countenance was steeped in doubt as we started out together the following day close to the appointed hour. He seemed to want to dally on the path, stopping to flick iota of dust from his boot toes with his handkerchief and looking up at the sky as though he feared it might rain. Twice he suggested a better day for our call would be tomorrow.

"If I could only get 'em alone, now, I know I could fix it," he pleaded. "But this three fiancées at once is bad, Milliken, bad. Makes a fellow feel he may have overdone it a bit."

A trim maid presently ushered us into Audrey's living room.

"Pretty chic, that," muttered Herbie. "D'you note the ankles? Milliken, old man, pass me a cough lozenge or something. Old throat's all parched and quivering. Feeling as nervous as a bridegroom awaiting the beloved."

Perhaps it was as well we did not have long to wait before Herbie's fiancées appeared, accompanied by an ominous silence. Never have I seen such loveliness gathered beneath a single ceiling. All the perfumes of Araby seemed to drift into the room at once, and Herbie instantly became restive like a little war horse.

"Ladies," I said briefly, acknowledging their entrance by a nod. "We shall waste no time on unnecessary formalities. Take the lounge, please. Mr. Hetherington over here on this chair. The case is now on trial."

Audrey was in something black and clinging and was resting her chin on her hand while her soulful gaze inspected Herbie. There was more of sorrow than anger in it. Norrie, the old darling, sat, very powdery and composed, with her hands in her lap. Miss Patricia Swords curled herself up amid

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the cushions, taking care plenty of silk stocking would show. My audience was ready. I paced the carpet, thinking my thoughts.

I have always been informed that Milliken has in him the makings of a splendid trial lawyer. I have never taken the trouble to deny it. I cleared my throat. A man's whole happiness was at stake.

"This man"—three beautiful pairs of eyes settled upon our Herbie, who winced—"this man may seem to you a scoundrel of the deepest dye. He may seem to you, I say, a conscienceless philanderer, one who would with a laugh break the heart of an innocent girl and go upon his way. Beneath his vest, you may well declare, beats a heart of stone—black, evil, and trebly deceitful."

"Here, here, Milliken," gulped Herbie at this telling point. "Not fair, that. I'm employing you."

Milliken had seized the attention of his audience with his opening sentence. Already they were looking at me in amazement. Firmly I waved Herbie's words aside.

"The objection is incompetent, irrelevant, and immaterial. Yes," I proceeded on a more expansive note, "we have here a man who appears from all our evidence to be of the lowest type; a smug, rapacious Don Juan, a prowling Lothario seeking whom he may devour and of whose presence the world would well be rid by the guillotine of France. Like a snake, you may say, he has crawled into the affections of three of America's fairest. Like a lizard he has looked up to them and fascinated them with his bright, beady gaze. Like an octopus he has wound his sleek tentacles about them and made them his." Here Milliken paused for a bit of breath.

"Oh," whispered Audrey in hushed accents.

I could see wonder dawning in Norrie's lovely eyes.

Young Pat Swords began to clap.

"Milliken, you're marvelous. Do go on about Herbie."

The little Mormon looked as though I had bitten him on the hand or something as Milliken bowed to the various tributes and became once more the intense orator.

"Yes, we may say all that of him and more. Men have been hung for less. And—I shall be frankness itself—were I the attorney for the plaintiffs in this case of Lane, Swords and Post vs. Hetherington, that is what I should say. You see, I am fair, ladies; I present your side of the case first. But—but—and here is the point"—I drove my fist into my palm with a stirring, original gesture—"who are we to judge this fellow being on purely circumstantial evidence? Ladies, despite all signs to the contrary, despite all circumstances against him, there walks the earth today no finer, truer specimen of American manhood than Herbert Hetherington!"

"What is love?" I thrust my finger at Audrey, fascinating her. "It is the snapper on the end of the limerick called life. What is love?" I passed on to Norrie, the outdoor girl. "It is a blazing match cast into the gasoline tank of human emotion. What is love?" Charming, twenty-year-old Pat came next. "It is the shimmying of two souls to the jazz band of the angels. And this man, this Herbert Hetherington, is the great lover."

"Aha, Milliken," cried Herbie. "Now your talking sense." He commenced to beam his approval. Up until now I cannot frankly say that he had viewed me with pleasure. Nor until now as I warmed moment by moment to my work had I been conscious that my audience was enlarging. In some mysterious manner the minor poet, Pierre Valvou, had appeared behind me as well as young Mr. Filbert, the All-American fullback. Somebody must have left the door open. Even now around its edge

peeped a third acquaintance, Monsieur Napoleon Chericourt.

But your really competent lawyer is known by the rapidity with which he seizes upon the unexpected and turns it to account. Here might have been cause for nervousness. But boldly I closed the door upon the nose of Monsieur Napoleon and went over and took the minor poet by the flapping end of his tie. I addressed my breathless audience.

"Could this man be in love with three girls at one and the same time? No, no, and again no! He may cover reams of the finest parchment with his noble thoughts, but he falls short of the Olympian heights. The seed of such greatness of soul is not in him. Nor in this splendid specimen of Yankee muscle," I exclaimed, placing a comradely hand on the shoulder of the All-American full back. "Simple, direct, straightforward—you see his character in his face. His thews may bulge but his soul sleeps. He is not Herbie Hetherington, the great lover."

There was no doubt at all about the attention Milliken, the shrewd lawyer, was getting. Pierre Valvou snapped his fingers at me menacingly and young Mr. Filbert frowned.

"Blah," he suggested ungraciously. "Hang onto the horns when you throw the next one."

It was time for a final bold, swift stroke by Milliken.

"Look at him!" I achieved quite a decent thunder, if I may say so. "Look at this man to whom love is the very breath of existence! Mark the appealing innocence of his eye, perceive the innate naïveté of that candid face. There is but one Herbert Hetherington in the world, gentlemen of the—that is, ladies. At heart he is but a guileless child. Brush aside the petty cloud of evidence against him. Delve deep into the clear, fine metal of his being. Disregard the worldly furnishings of a waxed moustache and new white spats. Herbert

Hetherington is a victim of his own great self!"

The little Mormon appeared thoroughly convinced by my passionate appeal. He preened himself publicly on his chair, twisting his spiked moustache and putting forth his chest. In another moment he would undoubtedly go over and look at himself in the mirror.

"And now," concluded Milliken, overcome by honest emotion, "there is but one thing to be done. Examine truly your hearts, ladies. Ask yourself frankly the question: 'Can I measure my own love against the tremendous, all-embracing love of a man like this?' For Herbert Hetherington is a law-abiding man. This is not Utah. He can and will remain engaged to but one of you. Two of you, ladies, two of you, I repeat, must give my client up. You must—ah, sublime word—renounce him. He will be broken-hearted; for dreary months to come he will not be the same; who knows but that his love for all of you will haunt him to the grave? But he will bear the blow with fortitude. He will appreciate the greatness of the sacrifice that two of you will undergo. He will keep your memory forever fresh in his throbbing breast. Ladies, I have said enough. We leave you to your thoughts. To-morrow we shall call again to be informed which of you it is to be that will make this inimitable lover happy. Sleep well. Sleep soundly for joy cometh in the morning."

"O-oh," murmured Audrey.

"A-ah," trilled Pat.

As for Norrie, her marveling eyes never left my face. All were supremely touched by Milliken's mouthful. I took Herbie gently by the elbow and propelled the fellow toward the door. He seemed to want to stay and hear some more. But we found our path blocked by the threatening figure of the minor poet. More frenziedly than ever Pierre Valvou rolled his eyes.

"Breaker of hearts!" he flung at our Herbie, "I challenge you to the duel. Name your weapons."

Our Herbie met the attack like a man of courage.

"Heads of lettuce at ten paces," he said spiritedly.

And then he observed advancing upon him the two-hundred-and-sixty-five-pound person of young Mr. Filbert, the All-American full back. His, as I had pointed out, was a character simple, direct, and straightforward. He had upon him shoulders like an ox and fists like cobblestones.

"You little bum," he stated, his eye on Herbie's jaw.

"Quick, Milliken!" cried Herbie, skipping lightly through the door. "We'll be late for the ball game."

Blithely he waved his wanghee stick in farewell to a room still brimming with emotion and caromed off the frock coat of Monsieur Napoleon Chericourt. In French law, I believe, it is permissible to keep the ear applied to a key-hole. Those of Monsieur Napoleon were large.

"R-rabbit!" exploded Monsieur Napoleon fiercely. "I am rejoice zat at ze 'otel zey 'ave tell me I s'all find you 'ere. Now I know all zat I weesh to know. *Cochon!*"

"I am to be queen of the May," said Herbie brightly. "Will you play ring-a-rosy with me?"

The mouth of Monsieur Napoleon was still emitting gurgling sounds when we reached the lift. Faint fragments of his conversation continued to drift down the corridor to us.

"I will ze polis summon. I will ze r-revenge 'ave for ze insults of ze crazee Monsieur 'Etherington! Hyena!"

"Good old Milliken," cried Herbie, out in the pulsing Paris street once more. He twirled his wanghee magnificently. "Greatest speech I ever heard. D'you see how big their eyes got while they looked at me? Fairly brimmed with

the old affection. My gad, it breaks my heart to think I can only keep one of 'em. Milliken, I swear I love 'em all."

I retired early that night, justly pleased with Milliken. As for Herbie, the bright-faced fellow, we had hardly reached our apartment before he was on the telephone calling up some low friend of his at the legation and finding out that in France, too, they have wrong numbers. The legation arrived shortly before dinner with the news that he had two peacherinos waiting in the foyer downstairs. A gendarme brought Herbie in about dawn.

"Lie zere, mad American," he remarked and tossed Herbie onto the bed. "You cannot pick ze chapeau off ze head of ze gendarme in Paris. Non, non, non!"

Our Herbie still was making strange sounds amid the covers when important business of my own took me out for luncheon at Ciro's. A nice place, Ciro's. I had a most cheering time there, surrounded by a gay and costly crowd. The music also was most stimulating to the conversation. In fact, Milliken was practically whistling and giving away copper sous to beggars when he returned to the hotel. There sat Herbie, gallantly groomed, upon the terrace, dallying with something to keep the winkers open.

"Ha, Milliken, late as usual," he accused without basis. "Never saw such an undependable fellow."

Herbie ceased. His bright eye had caught sight of the three lilac-tinted letters I had drawn from my pocket.

"What you got there—bills? Put 'em away. Can't be bothered with bills in Paris."

"I've just come from luncheon with Norrie Post." I broke the news in a splendid, legal manner. "I bear the tidings to you from your fiancées. Open them, Herbie. Be a man. See which two out of three have given you up,

that you may be happy with the lucky one."

"Milliken," husked our Herbie, his little lips twisting pathetically, "I don't dare. My gad, man, when I think of losing any one of those marvelous girls my heart aches. Which one of 'em d'you spouse will win? Audrey?"

"I don't know."

"Pat?"

"I don't know."

"Norrie?"

"I don't know."

"Ignorant ass," observed our Herbie. "I'll find out for myself." He tore open the first letter to hand and gulped. "Audrey has given me up," he got out mournfully. "There was a wonderful girl for you, Milliken! Full of soul and ideals. She says she'll never forget me, but it is best this way."

The second letter fluttered.

"It's from Pat. Dear little Pat. Pep and ginger and wiles there." His tone fell into a dirge. "She renounces me, Milliken. Something about her being young and able to get over it in time. Wonder if she ever will. So it's Norrie who gets me, after all. Good old Norrie!"

The hair on Herbie Hetherington's head arose. His bright eyes grew glassy and dull. His immaculate person wilted. He had opened the third letter.

"Milliken! Milliken! Milliken! Norrie has given me up, too!"

Milliken gazed upon a broken wreck across the table from him. Never before had our Herbie known what it was not to be engaged to anybody. The shock was terrific.

"Been handed the brown derby," he muttered disjointedly. "Can't believe it. Whole life blasted. Feel like a castaway on a desert island."

His glance rose despairingly. Then he leaped to his feet, crumpling the lilac-tinted letters. A look of infinite yearning appeared in his eye.

"Herbie," I cried. "Herbie, old man!"

"A sail!" gurgled Herbie. "A sail!" Artless and bewitching, Desirée Deroche was seated alone at a corner table. As one who is drawn by a spell our Herbie staggered toward her and sat down, his tragic eyes upon her face. Words began to pour out of his mouth.

"'Erbie, you love me?" I heard her red, red lips say.

"Passionately. Adoringly. Desirée! Sweetheart!" Within thirty seconds our Herbie had her lovely hands in his. There was nothing for Milliken to do but sit still and watch the two fast workers getting together. *Le Matin*, doubtless, in its next issue would carry the formal announcement of their betrothal.

It was then that a large black motor van with "Maison Leboeuf" letter on its side drew up at the terrace, and four gorilla-like individuals, in gray uniforms and black, glazed caps, hopped out of it and invaded the terrace, looking about them in a crudely business-like way. Our old friend, Monsieur Napoleon Chericourt, who had been missing for almost a full day, appeared from some hiding place and put himself at their head.

"Ah!" he cried, sighting me and waving a paper with a large, red seal, "I 'ave come for your friend. I 'ave 'ad 'im comit to ze private sanitarium for ze craziness in ze 'ead. Ze good Doctor Leboeuf will treat 'im wiz ze mos' distinguished kindness. Soon will 'e know bettaire zan to affiance 'imself to all ze ladies in Amerique and France and insult Napoleon Chericourt!"

The keepers from the Maison Leboeuf, who had been sniffing around, came to a point.

"Zere! Zere is ze lunatic!" exclaimed Monsieur Napoleon, pointing to Herbie. "Make him ze prisoner! Cochon!"

But Milliken was slightly quicker. A good lawyer acts on the instant. I made Herbie's table with a neat start on the uniforms.

"Herbie!" I shouted, seizing him by the collar of his morning suit. "Come with Milliken for a gallop."

Herbie came, piteously, reaching out his arms in farewell to Desirée and bringing the cloth off the table in one clutching hand. But I had the little Mormon in the unfaltering grasp of a true friend. We found ourselves sprinting down the street with an ominous black van lurching and pounding along in our rear. Between puffs I explained our dire peril.

"Well," objected our Herbie, legging it brightly along, "you might have given a chap a chance to say good-by to a girl, Milliken"—he began to pant as the blocks reeled off—"M-Milliken, there's a guh-girl for you! One in a thuh-thousand! We were just guh-getting engaged again."

Behind us Monsieur Napoleon, still brandishing his document, gave tongue from the front seat of the black maria. Its running board bristled with gorillas in glazed caps. Two of the same gorillas by violent leaps and bounds were gaining upon us through the sidewalk crowd. It was not a moment for congratulations of any kind. We hopped headlong through the door of a taxicab and commenced to wave fifty-franc notes.

"Drive!" I shouted. "Drive like Halifax!"

The eye of the pirate at the wheel glistened as he visioned the crackling bills.

"Ah, oui," he cried. "To 'Alifax!" And stepped upon it. The taxi thoughtfully left the ground with three of its wheels and started to fly through the air. Monsieur Napoleon and the black maria became pleasant specks in the distance.

"Faster!" commanded our Herbie and shoved a banknote down the chauffeur's neck. "Vite! More vite le flivver!" Atrocious as was his mastery of the Gallic language, his meaning appeared to be understood. The fourth and last wheel

of the taxi left the asphalt, which we were now touching only at intervals. In Paris, as all American tourists know, that is their favorite way of driving.

Out into a broad and shining boulevard we came like a humming bird, our pilot caring nothing for man or devil. His thrifty Parisian brain was merely informing him that there were fifty francs down the back of his neck for him to earn.

"Look!" cried Herbie as we clipped the skirt off a gendarme's coat. "Milliken, look, look! It's Audrey and Pat!"

Two beautiful girls, indeed, were rolling down the boulevard alongside of us in a taxicab whose roof was piled with trunks and other luggage. Audrey inclined her dark head in our direction and Miss Patricia Swords blew us a kiss from the tips of her fingers, after which they returned disinterestedly to inspection of themselves in the mirrors of their vanity cases.

"Going to Deauville. I heard so this morning," I told our Herbie sadly. "Look in that taxicab behind them."

It contained one minor poet with a temperamental tie and one All-American full back whose hatband glistened brightly in the sun. Pierre Valvou and young Mr. Filbert seemed happy fellows as they bowed along behind the first taxicab. The roof of their vehicle also was full of bags and things.

"They're going to Deauville, too," shrieked our Herbie. "Blast 'em both, the lounge lizards! But Norrie isn't there. She isn't going. She's the one I really loved. Good old Norrie! Girl in a thousand! Driver, arretez le oil can! I'm going back to Norrie."

"You are not," I beamed. "Norrie and I became engaged at luncheon right after she'd given you up. It was that speech of mine did the trick. She said a man who could make a speech like that would be wonderful in the long winter evenings. Congratulate us, old man."

"Traitor! Backbiting shyster!" screamed our Herbie and flung himself at my throat. In another moment, battling each other intensively, we rolled over the front of the taxicab and added the driver to the party. The taxi, with its pilot gurgling somewhere in the welter, veered promptly, abruptly, and decisively, and came up against something solid. There was the loud, shattering sound of tin and glass meeting stone.

It was the Arc de Triomphe. Any competent guide to-day for a franc will show you the dent we made in it.

"Herbie," I said to him as the shadows of evening were falling in the accident ward and they stopped the stretcher at my request by the side of his cot, "they say they have to take a bit of the bas relief out of my neck. Shake hands with old Milliken before he goes under the ether."

All that was visible of Herbie was the end of a moustache and the tip of a little nose peeking forth from scientific bandages. Somewhere amid the creams I heard a tooth grate.

"No," said Herbie. "Black-hearted scoundrel. I hope you never come out from it." He turned what was left of his face to the wall and prepared to die.

It was the last evening on shipboard. To-morrow, rising out of the west, Liberty and her torch would welcome us home. Milliken will always have a good word to say for the medical surgery of the French nation, which was returning him and our Herbie to the land of their birth, with never a scar.

For five days now the great liner had been shouldering her way across the waters, and during all that time not a word had passed between Herbie and myself. The man was nurturing the most enduring and unjust hatred, causing his spiked little moustache to curl frightfully whenever I crossed his vision. We occupied staterooms far apart. We were worse than strangers.

Yet none the less Milliken felt content. In the face of blame and calumny he was bringing the little Mormon home a free, unfettered man and, in so doing, through sheer worth of character, he had won the heart of a beautiful girl. I went up on the boat deck, from where the moon looks larger, to think some more about it. Twice I paced its length, listening to the low, tender murmurings from the paired steamer chairs. Finally I rested my arms on the rail, watching the countless gallons of the Atlantic rushing by. Of whom was Norrie, the old darling, thinking at this moment? The chest expanded.

"Milliken," I heard a familiar voice in my rear. "Good old Milliken!"

I turned. It was Herbie and the old winning smile of friendship brightened his face. Beside him was a slim, attractive young person with roguish eyes, whom I had noted casually at his table. Two empty steamer chairs in a sheltered nook behind them told from whence they had just arisen.

"Let bygones be bygones," cried our Herbie magnanimously. He wrung me by the hand and clapped me on the back. The fellow seemed bubbling over with the joyful emotion of our affection renewed within sight of the native land. "Can't hold a grudge with that moon up above there. Been bringing out all the best in me for a week. You did me a good turn in Paris. Honor bright, you did. If it hadn't been for you I might still be hooked up with any one of those three. Then I'd have missed this boat and the greatest adventure in life. My gad, Milliken, I'm the happiest man in the world!"

Here Milliken became conscious that our Herbie was pressing forward the petite young lady with roguish eyes and smile.

"She's a girl in a thousand! Milliken, good old Milliken, I want you to meet my fiancée. She's from South Fork, Indiana. We're engaged."



A Café in Cairo



By Izola Forrester

Author of "The White Moth,"
"The Temperamental Zone," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

Barry Braxton, attaché at the American embassy in Constantinople, was sent to Cairo to deliver to Lord Raversham, British commissioner, important secret dispatches. While waiting for Raversham Barry went, on a tip from Henri Mantzon, whom he had met in Constantinople, to the café of Zaradi in the Street of the Pomegranates. There he met and fell in love with Naida, a dancing girl of unusual beauty and brilliant mind, a protégée of Zaradi.

On his return to his hotel he found an invitation from the Countess Tavarin to escort her to the Café l'Orient. There he met Lady Edenham, Raversham's sister, and also a party of old friends from the States: Tom Hayes, his wife Peggie, and his sister Rosamond. They treated him with marked coldness, and he discovered that they had seen Naida in his suite at the hotel, and misunderstood the situation.

On returning to his rooms, however, Barry found that Naida had indeed been there. She had left a note to tell him that Zaradi was sending her down the river to the House of Stars and temporary confinement until the talk about the dead monk, who had been found murdered in the garden of Zaradi's café, had blown over.

That afternoon Barry went with Rosamond and her party to a tea given by Madame Marigny on the house boat of André Fromelin, French representative in Cairo. There he met Caselli, the unfrocked priest, Naida's teacher, who warned him that, if he attempted to see Naida at the House of Stars, he would probably never return alive. But Barry's resolve remained unshaken.

That evening he recovered the dispatches for Lord Raversham from the hotel safe where he had deposited them before going to the house boat, and took them with him to the reception Lady Edenham was giving for her brother. He delivered them to the British commissioner with a feeling of tremendous relief that now he was free to follow Naida, only to discover when the packet was opened that it contained blank paper. Some one had lifted the seals, removed the dispatches, and resealed the envelope. He remembered Naida's visit to his rooms. Well, now at least he was unhampered by any illusions about her. Determining to wring from her the destination of the stolen papers, Barry went, as arranged, to the House of Stars, bearing in mind a hint given him by Caselli that an old reservoir, dry at this time of year, might furnish a convenient means of retreat from the ancient, fortified palace. He gained admittance to the building unobserved, but in searching through the rooms he encountered a tall, black-skinned Kabyle, who, recognizing the presence of a stranger, attacked him.

CHAPTER XII.

IN the shifting amber radiance from the narrow, cylindrical lantern above their heads, the two figures seemed to pose motionless as statues in their first strained hold on each other.

Hardly a movement was visible in that taut rivalry of tense muscles, in Barry's desperate effort to loosen the hold of the Agha. A slight shifting of bare, planted feet, a sudden advantage as he was able to twist the other's ankle forward, and he found he

was free to use old familiar college tactics.

The yellow silk robe of the negro ripped in his clutching fingers as he sought to grip the slippery surface. The man grunted like a wild boar, throwing more strength into his hold until he feinted and caught Barry's throat from behind in a deadly clinch.

The vaulted, shadowy room, with its gayly tinted frescoes, swayed in a mist before Barry's eyes as he was forced backward. It seemed as if instead there came before him the old gym room, the huge oil lamps with their queer green shades, and Barlow steady-ing him for the final clinch in practice. His shoulders and back had always been his best assets in wrestling. There must be some trick, some of the good old shifts that would save him now. The man had no science. It was sheer brute strength opposed to him.

Barry's dry lips parted in a slow, hard grin as he strained forward and down with all his might against that throttling arm. He felt the weight of the Agha rise from the black-and-white marble floor. He seemed to stretch visibly in length like some hideous, contorted genie form, his eyeballs protruding in terror as he realized his peril. His left arm shot upward suddenly, the dim light in the vaulted shadows gleaming a second along the edge of a knife before it reached Barry's side. Yet the brown, gleaming body was raised higher on the powerful young shoulders, seemed to poise a second on the swollen, tense muscles before it crashed over the American's head to the marble floor and lay still, a limp, shapeless mass like a distorted shadow.

The fall sounded with dull violence through the upper rooms of the palace, breaking the silence like a far-distant explosion. Built in the Oriental period of a hundred years ago, the palace was a mingling of Egyptian and Turkish

architecture. Octagon-shaped outside, its massive eighteen-foot walls of stone surrounded gardens of luxurious beauty. Zaradi's wealth had restored much of its splendor. He had used it as a citadel against the menace of the future. Here, if Islam failed to hold her own, he might still retire in peace, surrounded by the literature and art treasures that he preferred. Again, it had proved a convenient receptacle for many otherwise embarrassing personalities, detained as unwilling guests at the House of Stars under orders from the High Council.

The women's quarters occupied the southern side of the palace, into which Barry had unwittingly blundered in choosing a convenient escape from the lower court. Here, when the place had been at the fullness of its splendor, the spacious, vaulted rooms had been filled with beauty and its slaves, its inlaid wall cabinets crowded with priceless jewels and garments, the silk rugs on walls and divans looted from the most hidden treasures of the Mamelukes' Turkish masters.

Batooka had chosen for her girl mistress the most luxurious suite overlooking an enclosed garden. It was here that Naida had spent her childhood from the day when Kali had brought her from the Daid-el-Marar oasis with the old slave woman, and had delivered her to Zaradi. Here Caselli had visited her three times weekly, teaching her with pleasure subjects usually reserved for those born to rule. Here Zélie de Marigny had come with gay assurance, delighting in the child's aptitude, in her responsive cleverness in assimilating all she had to convey to her.

Zélie had never felt jealousy toward her then. Possibly she had not guessed at the promise of Naida's beauty and elusive gift for selecting what she preferred from the mass of teaching and discarding the balance. The latent Orientalism in the Frenchwoman's own

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nature responded to the luxurious lure to indolence in the daily life of the old palace, where Naida had spent hours in gazing out of the oriel-latticed windows at the distant minarets and towers visible in the violet haze toward Cairo. Across the Nile itself she could see the Pyramids standing like shrouded Titanic sibyls in the golden desert glow beyond Gizeh. Restlessly, during those years of seclusion and study, she had awaited the hour when Zaradi should take her to the café and initiate her in her mission thereafter, to attract and allure and betray those whom Islam wished to destroy.

To-night she sat on the edge of her couch, reading the book which lay open on her knees, while Batooka gave her hair its nightly rose bath. Her night robe of finest white silk-and-lace embroidery was the final word in Parisian daintiness. Over it she had flung a heavy burnoose of gold-threaded satin, tangerine hued, a challenge to her mood. Beside her on the couch were books chosen at random to glance at before she fell asleep, Loti's letters from the Sahara, a thin volume of Verlaine, one of Grammont's "Memoirs of the Court of Charles the Second," all gifts of Zélie's in the past. Beside them lay a guidebook to America, an English testament, new, bound in mission black. The one on her lap was an English dictionary.

"Lean lower, little sun ray," Batooka urged, dipping her wrinkled fingers deeply into the baskets of rose petals beside her, and rubbing them gently into the heavy curling masses of dark, soft hair tumbled over slim white shoulders. "Blessed am I to be chosen to tend thy loveliness; blessed am I that I may add one jot to its riches. The rose bath of Ayesha gladden thy dreams."

Her fingers paused, convulsed, rigid, at the smothered, reverberating crash coming from their own side of the palace.

"What was that?" Naida listened alertly, rising, thrusting her bare feet into velvet slippers. "Batooka, did you hear where it came from—down below or in the galleries?"

The old woman drew her brown burka around her and hobbled to the outer vestibule to listen at the barred door.

"Ibn M'zab lies without," she said stolidly. "I will ask him, the lazy, black pig, why he allows clamor to disturb my flower."

She opened the door with Naida behind her carrying a candle, set into a brass upcurled lotus bud. The pallet where the Agha was accustomed to lie at night was stretched before the threshold, empty. Naida pointed down the high-vaulted corridor to where a long oblong of luminous yellow showed in the mother-of-pearl gloom.

"It came from there," she said imperatively.

"I go, I go," murmured Batooka resentfully, hastening along noiselessly until she stopped short, listening cautiously outside the heavily draped archway, reaching with stealthy fingers to draw back the silken rug which hung halfway across it so that she might peer beyond. Behind her, Naida stepped lightly, her ears straining to catch any sound within.

"Oh, but you are stupid!" she exclaimed, thrusting aside the stooping, hesitant figure, and standing herself on the threshold of the room revealed beyond them. She stared with quick, puzzled eyes at the crumpled, indistinguishable forms which lay upon the black-and-white marble floor, one flung across the other.

"Squabbling monkeys," Batooka grumbled. "I will call the slaves. Touch them not, my orange blossom. They may be dead, Allah willing."

"Call not," Naida ordered briefly. She knelt beside the upper figure, staring intently at the stark young throat, the deathlike face of Barry Braxton.

For a moment the garb of the Syrian boatman had deceived her as it had the Agha, but now she knew him. Her eyes widened in horror, softened again to the first hot rush of tears as she bent over him in agony, striving to lift him from the other body. "And so you have come," she whispered with pitiful tenderness, smoothing back the tangled blond hair with lingering touch from his damp forehead. "Beloved, is it so that you have come to find me?"

Batooka, disregarding her, had closed the great, narrow doors, barring them against intrusion from the servants' quarters. Hobbling back, she tore open the remnants of shirt and exposed the American's breast, laying her ear to it eagerly.

"Na, na, he lives, praise be to Allah," she said. "Wait now." Her shriveled hands with their dark swollen veins traveled with experience over his body, finding what she sought. She drew from his side the narrow, native blade with a grunt of satisfaction, holding one hand against the wound to check the gush of blood. Guessing her need, Naida ripped to long strips the delicate white silk of her nightrobe, aiding her to bind it tightly about his body under the armpits. Batooka viewed the result with satisfaction, slipped her hands under his arms, and dragged him from the Agha's body.

"Is Ibn M'zab dead?" Naida whispered.

"Praise be to Allah if he is," said the old woman fervently. "A bloated toad, a crocodile of black misery, Kali's cursed dog. Lift the man's head and give him wine. See now, he cannot swallow. Moisten the end of thy scarf and squeeze the wine drops in his mouth, wet his lips with it."

"If some one should come, Batooka —" she said fearfully. She who had never known dread for herself felt a thousand fears now for the man whom she loved.

"Who might come? Only Ibn M'zab serves us here. The women slaves are all sleeping, and he is mercifully dead. May he wander six thousand years in darkness." Batooka squatted with intense satisfaction beside the prostrate form. Her eyes, the only sign about her of former beauty, glanced shrewdly about for a safe hiding-place. Beneath a heap of silken cushions, within the deep wall cabinets, behind the fourfold screen of meshrabiyyeh work, swiftly her mind, weighed and discarded each in turn.

The narrow slits in the stone wall that served as windows in this living hall caught her eye, but they were too high up for two women to think of lifting the heavy body between them and pitching it through the window into the flowing river. She gave it a contemptuous shove with her foot, and threw a couple of rags over it.

"Let lay for now. The living must be served. A man may break his neck alone with no other help than from a wine bottle and his own folly. Let go your hold, my breath of the south; we will carry him inside and tend him."

"He is not dead, you are sure, Batooka?" Naida begged as she obeyed the old woman's directions, lifting Barry's feet, while Batooka raised him like a sleeping child on her broad back, her strong old arms linked under his shoulders.

"Have I said he was not? The stars have said. Shall love be robbed by death before fulfillment when they foretold he is the one? Move slowly now. The wound will weep to beg you not to hurry. And so, and so. Allah's might, but he is light of weight to have killed Ibn M'zab."

They moved, it seemed, by inches, back along the corridor in darkness save for the faint light through the archway, until the sleeping chambers were gained. First crossing the ante-room where the Agha's pallet lay, into

the inner blind room where Batooka slept. Beyond was Naida's own room, of a peculiar half circle in shape, its diameter bordered by a long balcony used as a lounging room in the daytime. From this a stone stairway wound circularly down to the garden space below, a terraced expanse open to the sky, with perfumed fountains rising among its flowering shrubs, and palm trees lifting feathery fronds above the palace roof.

Batooka chose her own bed, a couple of soft pads laid on a raised dais, covered over with dyed cotton coverlids. Naida pleaded to place him in the luxurious chamber beyond.

"Well enough here," grunted Batooka as she lowered Barry down among the many cushions. "You shall drop wine between his lips now while I stanch the flow from his wound. It is not deep, little gazelle, I promise you it is not deep. Against the second rib the knife struck, guided by Allah's pity to save him for you. What is a rib or so to a young man in his first strength? See now, he breathes easier."

As she talked on soothingly, she worked over the wound with brown ointment she had taken from a cedar chest against the wall. Holding the edges of the clean cut together, she smeared it thickly with the mixture, rebinding it with experienced hands while Naida watched her with agonized eyes, suppressed pain, her fingers wound tightly about each other.

"Speak now, if he will hear your voice or no," Batooka urged. "He dreams, and knows it well through all his dreaming. Not loudly, beloved. Close to his ears breathe it with all your love until his spirit hears and turns about from the shadows."

Obediently Naida knelt beside the low couch, her face close to the one which lay so terrifying still among the gay silken pillows.

"Bar-ree," she whispered, her voice thrillingly tender and insistent. "Bar-ree, hear me, I beg of you!" she pleaded.

The old woman rose, watched her in nodding silence for a delighted moment, and stole out of the room to watch the outer door. With broken sobs, the girl wound her arms about him, gathering him close on her shoulder, her face pressed to his chilled cheek with almost maternal yearning.

"Why should you," she breathed longingly, "oh, how dare you seek to leave me, beloved? Answer me! You shall not die! I could not let you go! Open your eyes to mine. Ah, love, forgive me. Was I unkind to you? Wait for me, selfish one, along the path of tears! Go not alone!"

Her face sank over his, blinded with hot tears. It was Batooka's hand that roused her presently.

"Not so loudly," she whispered. "See, he has moved his arm. His breathing is quieter. Raise from his breast; you smother him, foolish one. Give him more wine. Gkk!" She clicked her tongue against the roof of her palate with approval as she took the girl's place, and lifted him up against her shoulder. "He is a man, I say. His back is as strong as the young leopard of the desert. And he has heard you, bloom of dawn. See how the blood has stopped flowing. It is not fresh upon the bandage now. Give me the cup."

With a steady hand she set the silver cup against Barry's half-parted lips and found that he gulped and swallowed as she tilted it. A deep-drawn breath that was more a sigh, and his eyelids lifted reluctantly. He stared ahead of him at the unfamiliar wall as if through a gray film, back from the silk rugs to the brown, grinning, toothless face nodding to him encouragingly, and closed his eyes.

"Behold, he will have none of me,

the splendid one, the choice of all dreams," chuckled Batooka. "Speak thou to him, and his heart will leap with joy."

Eagerly Naida leaned over the couch, her beautiful eyes brooding with tenderness over him.

"You are safe now, Bar-ree," she said softly. "So you did come to me after all, beloved owl?"

He eyed her fixedly between narrowed lids, his mouth twisting sideways in the pitiful semblance of a smile.

"You know that was—a rotten trick you played on me." The words came jerkily between set teeth. "Give me the letter."

She drew back with startled eyes. Batooka had again retired tactfully. Naida strove for control.

"No trick was played upon you," she said with grave, sweet dignity. "I have your letter. No eyes but mine have seen it. No one knows that I have it. I swear this to you faithfully."

The grin lingered on his parched lips, the film cleared from before his eyes as he saw her now in the amber light from the swinging copper lanterns overhead.

"I found your invitation in my trunk," he said slowly. "You stole the letter, didn't you, broke into my trunk and portfolio, robbed me, discredited me to Raversham? How did you do it? Where did you get hold of my keys?"

He tried to raise himself on his elbow.

"Lie still," she said calmly. "The wound will open. Zaradi ordered Haddad to go to your room while you were away. All Cairo swarms with Zaradi's spies. The way is open to any place he seeks to reach through Islam's secret power. Haddad was given replicas which had been made of your keys before you left Constantinople. He

came and told me because I had made him promise to do so. The killing of the monk was true, but the second knife was thrown by Kali himself to blind you, to give me a chance to search your inner pockets while you held me in your arms, for your keys. When I failed Zaradi suspected me. That is why he said he would banish me here for nine days until you had returned. Haddad told me, and together we slipped out of the house through another way, down underground through the wine cellars to the cellar of Desha Abbas, the copper-smith. I thought to warn you and have you save me from them, the Moslems. I swear to you I speak the truth." This at the flicker of contemptuous disbelief in Barry's eyes.

"But why did you do it?" he persisted. "Because you've been trained to that sort of thing, haven't you? You're the bait for them, the decoy to attract men whom they mark for quarry. You told me so yourself. You want to be that sort of woman, the beloved of the ages." He laughed, a choked sort of chuckle. "The damned of the ages, the damned, cursed breed that hobbles the heels of the swift and brings them down in one glorious, dishonorable smash. But you've never fooled me, not for one instant." He blurted out his words with blazing, accusing eyes, the rage of a maddened boy. "You needn't think that you did. You and Zaradi, staging all that bunk melodrama for my benefit, your dead monk and flying daggers, and that stuff. You tricked me behind my back, but I found you out! That razor blade with the red sealing wax on its edge—where did you learn that one, from Caselli or Zélie de Marigny? Fine teachers, aren't they! You give me that letter, do you hear?"

She drew away from him in silence, her eyes full of the torture he had applied to her inmost soul. She passed

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beyond the heavy hangings into her own chamber, and knelt in the corner behind her own dais. The colored tiles of the mosaic dado resisted her touch at first until she found and pressed the key tile. It moved readily, slipping from its place, bringing with it six others in star shape. In the wall recess disclosed there lay the Raversham letter. She drew it out and returned to where Barry waited for her impatiently, incredulously, the brilliant, taunting look in his eyes, the cynical unbelieving smile on his lips. His nerveless fingers fumbled over the folded papers eagerly.

"You've read it all?" he accused.

"Yes." She made the avowal simply. "Over and over again. I know it by heart."

"And spread the glad tidings to every damned Mussulman you could reach." He frowned with pain. "Where did you get that paper you left in place of this?"

"From Zaradi's own desk. It is the native rice paper. I had no other."

One hand traveled in perplexity over his bandaged body, found moisture, and brought back to his sight reddened fingertips. He eyed them curiously. "I've got to get out of here. Where are my clothes?"

"It is impossible to-night. You might bleed to death from your wound," Naida said with quick alarm. "The Agha is already dead."

"Agha?" he repeated, puzzled. "I know, the big black that lurched over me. I've got to get out of here." He repeated it with boyish obstinacy.

From somewhere down along the river below the outer walls of the palace, there came a quavering, long drawn-out cry of a water fowl, plaintive, questioning.

Barry's face set in tense, hard lines as he caught it. It was the signal agreed upon between the boy, Haddad, and himself. His hand crushed the letter convulsively as he strove to rise

from the low couch. At Naida's call, Batook hurried in, seized him from behind, held him fast. With a sudden spasm of weakness from struggling, he collapsed, slipping back unconscious on her shoulder.

"Better, better so," Batooka murmured, placing him on the cushions. "Let him rest there, fairest of the oases, and watch by him. It is the hour after midnight. I must see to Ibn M'zab, Allah curse him and set a seal on his lips."

Naida knelt on a cushion beside the couch, staring with wide, rebellious eyes at the man who had accused her of trickery, of treachery. Clenched in one hand as it lay beside him she saw the Raversham letter, and slowly, with hesitant fingers, she loosened his hold on it, slipping it within the folds of silk across her own breast.

The cry of the water fowl rose again along the river margin. She heard it without suspicion, lost in her own heart-searching reverie.

Haddad, waiting in the narrow fezzes under the acacia shadows, listened for an answering call and wondered drowsily what detained the American. Lovers lagged when the moon was low, he mused. Doubtless he had found Naida, after all. He sighed and stretched himself along the cushions to sleep a while.

Batooka stumbled over a tabouret as she crossed the wide hall, cursing soulfully under her breath by all the serpents of Abu-el-Dubara, and found the screen as she had left it, the crumpled rugs thrown down beside it.

Cautiously she raised one end and peered beneath. The body of the Agha was gone. Doubting her own memory of the spot where she had hidden it, she scurried about the dimly lighted room, searching under every possible place of concealment. Suddenly she stopped short, her eyes blinking warily. Before the windows which she had her-

self considered as a way of disposing of the body, she discovered a velvet ottoman piled high with cushions. Above it, the latticed casement swung wide to the night. The knife she had laid on the low table after drawing it from Barry's side had vanished, leaving behind on the inlaid surface a crimson stain.

She blinked up at the narrow oblong of luminous midnight sky visible through the open space, the full menace of the Agha's escape dawning upon her. He had belonged to Kali, brought from the eastern desert borders as a gift to Zaradi, but holding still to his old allegiance.

Stealing back along the corridor, she lay down on the pallet outside the door, mumbling to herself devout curses on Ibn M'zab wherever he might go, through fire, water, or air.

And downstream toward Cairo, the brown, half-nude figure of the Agha swam with long, easy strokes, taking his time, warned by the throbbing muscles of his strained back, but making steadily for the landing that would bring him nearest to the Street of the Pomegranates and Kali.

CHAPTER XIII.

The upper room at Zaradi's was closed to its customary frequenters before eleven that night. Batooka's daughter, a large, mild-eyed Arab woman, locked the cypress doors leading to the stairway, and prepared for the reception of Zaradi's expected personal guests.

It was not always necessary nor expedient to enter the café through the Street of Pomegranates, if one wished one's visit to be unobserved. When the bell in the Copt church, a stone's throw behind the high terrace wall, tolled for vespers, a hired taxi drew up at a discreet distance, and Zélie de Marigny stepped from it, ordering the native driver not to wait.

She was clad in the severest black, a slender, distinguishable type among the other women in their enshrouding burkas. The petal-pointed collar rose closely about her throat. From her close black turban, a veil of black Chantilly fell far below her shoulders, concealing her features and adding startlingly to her mysterious attractiveness. She entered the enclosed courtyard with other female devotees, knelt in silent prayer a while in the perfumed, dimly lighted interior, and rose to leave unobserved by the side entrance.

Fig trees and palms grew here and there in the enclosed garden. Beyond its hedges of prickly pears, one caught a glimpse of Zaradi's high walls, the terraces above leading to the upper garden. Apparently Zélie had no interest nor concern in these. She followed the path beneath the shadow of the palms to a door set deeply in the masonry, and passing through, emerged into a narrow, blind court where the copper-smith, Demas Abakopis, kept his family and shop under one small roof.

Faded orange-hued awnings hung across the court. A crowded stall, three sided, was jammed and overstuffed with Demas' offerings of an ancient craft. One stumbled over nests of pots and water jars. Caskets of pierced copper were thrown in corners with hammered trays and coffeepots, green and dulled by verdigris. Pendant from swinging chains, innumerable copper lamps, Aladdin-shaped, hung from the ceiling, all sizes. A new milch goat moved heavily and reluctantly away from the doorway to make way for Zélie.

She waited impatiently, her eyes restless and roving behind her veil, while Desha's olive-skinned, indolent wife laid aside a nursing child and entered the outer shop, curious and reticent at sight of a strange woman there unattended.

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"Have you jars for new wine?" asked the Frenchwoman in a low tone.

"Allah be praised for the vintage," responded the woman instantly, her sloe-black eyes alert now and watchful.

She led the way back of the shop into the common family living room, and raised a trap door concealed beneath a heavy chest. Her nine-year-old boy held a candle high for Zélie to descend the narrow, rickety flight of wooden steps into the cellar. She took it from his hand without a word of thanks, held her gown closely about her, and passed down into the musty depths.

The way was familiar to her, though unused for months. Only at certain momentous conferences had she ever been summoned secretly to Zaradi's upper room. But when the summons had come she had obeyed without question.

Bats fluttered awkwardly away from the flickering candle flame as she followed the cellar wall to the right. Three steps led up from its first turning into a vaulted passageway, barely wide enough for two to pass in. Along this she went for fifty yards or more and came at length to a heavy cypress door thick with funnel-shaped meshes of cobwebs. Dreading even to touch her hand to its visible filth, she kicked against it with the toe of her Parisian kid slipper, resentfully, impatiently, as if the ancient, dusty barrier typified in some way Zaradi's hold upon her to bring her there against her will.

The door opened inward, disclosing a dimly lighted room, its walls faced with broad shelves filled with wine casks and cobwebbed bottles. Fahtooma, Batoon's niece, stood aside to let her pass, her gaze following with grave discernment the slim black-clad figure as it hurried up the narrow circular stone stairway to the kitchen of Zaradi's household.

"You have a vile penchant for mystery," she exclaimed petulantly when

she emerged at last into the upper room where Zaradi awaited her coming. He turned from the reports he had been perusing, smiled at her with calmly weighing eyes. "A rat hole, a sewer. I hate myself after I have been down there. Give me some perfume." She seized a small crystal carafe of rose-water from a shelf and sprinkled it lavishly over her hands.

"You would then prefer to enter by the street door with the domino players and arrack drinkers? Where any lolling dog might carry the news to André Fromelin that his exquisite 'eyes of France' had found it expedient to visit the questionable precinct of Zaradi's *café*?"

Zélie shrugged slim, eloquent shoulders by way of a noncommittal reply, took the most comfortable corner of the pillowed divan, and drew her feet up under her as she lighted a cigarette from her own case. With a metal-headed stick Zaradi touched the brass cymbal hanging behind him on a scarlet silk cord, the slightest note, and Fahtooma moved noiselessly into the room from the curtained doorway.

"House slippers for madame," he ordered ironically. Zélie made a dry grimace, took the reproof, and removed her narrow high-heeled street gear. The woman returned to place on her feet flat-soled embroidered slippers of black and gold, while Zaradi returned his attention to his reports.

"André has not returned yet," she said presently, smoking in long inhalations as he ignored her. "So—I have no news for you."

"Whom have you news for to-night?" He smiled at her inscrutably. "You were about to leave when my message reached you. I am favored that you condescended to respond so promptly. Were you to be a guest at the Raver-sham reception to-night?"

"I do not traffic with the English, Achmed," she answered with the slow

nasal drawl which Barry had disliked. "You insinuate that I might have an object in attending, yes?"

"Why not? First love is ever strongest."

She flashed a look of intense contempt at him.

"I despise you when you talk like other men, Zaradi, to taunt and deal in innuendo. We know each other fairly well, *non?* Out with it direct, then. Say to me that you know what a fool I was once upon a time, and therefore you believe me capable of being a fool again. When all my life has been one long barrage of hate against the English!"

"What did Braxton tell you to-day?" he inquired blandly, overlooking her excited mood completely.

She narrated the events at the tea on the envoy's dahabéah, of Barry's arrival with the Hayses, of his long conversation with Fabian Caselli, of the unexpected guest, Mantzon.

"He followed Countess Tavarin." She blew contemptuous spirals into the perfumed air, laid turban and veil upon the tabouret beside her with deliberate disdain for Oriental custom, and settled herself luxuriously among the piled-up cushions. "You will never find any man trustworthy who is some woman's slave."

"So men say of Fromelin," remarked Zaradi.

"You compliment me as your pupil, Achmed," she retorted. "Do you then place this woman in the same class as myself? She has no diplomacy, no strategic power. She is strong by reason of her wealth and Mosul holdings. If it were not for these, do you think for one instant you and others of the high councils would consider her as anything but a pretty woman? You bade me interest André when he first came to Egypt. Are you envious now, because I have more influence with France than you?"

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"The countess is also French," he answered suavely.

"Ah, and do you then threaten me with her?" She lowered her cigarette, regarding him suspiciously for the first time. "I hate her, I warn you of that. I hate her absolutely. I would injure her in any way possible. She treats me like windfall fruit beneath a roadside tree. She is Parisian. I am part Algerian, and proud of it. She is a law to herself because she is rich, yes? What she may or may not do would be poison to another woman, but no one may speak evil against the Countess Tavarin. I tell you this, Zaradi." She rose suddenly from the couch, pacing restlessly back and forth over the silk rugs on the inlaid floor, one hand upon her supple hip. "I have proof that she offered herself to the American like any Ouled Nail of the desert. She told him she would go into the desert with him, give up her life to him if he would renounce this mission from Drake. And he refused her."

"What proof?" Zaradi inquired evenly.

"I have a Berber boy who spies for me within the hotel where she stays with Lady Edenham—Sadek Naroomh."

"Sadek?" Zaradi's eyebrows lifted ever so slightly. "A good boy. You choose well and wisely, Zélie."

"He listened after serving her breakfast, heard her plead with this American, and he repulsed by him."

"Even so? The love preferences of women, of what importance are they? No more than the caprices of the moon—variable, changeable. The countess is a true Frenchwoman from her heart. When you have said that of her, the rest is immaterial. She is faithful to the France of her ideal. She will hold her spirit under martial law, lay down her own life, if need be, to serve that ideal. You do not know the France she worships, Zélie."

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"You grow romantic." Zélie's tone was harshly guttural. "Who comes to you must needs serve only Islam. Have I ever failed you?"

"There comes to all the hour of retirement from service," Zaradi told her quietly. She wheeled about to face him with blanching face and wide, startled eyes of accusation.

"So this is why you have sent for me to-night! You have trained another to do your bidding. The dancing girl Naida is ready to act her rôle, yes? You are afraid of me, that I outplay you at your own game, Zaradi! You are afraid that my memory it is too good. You think that I grow old, and you must have the beautiful, the desirable, woman to betray and intrigue for you, yes? And you dare to imagine that I, Zélie de Marigny, will accept my dismissal easily, tamely, from you, with all that I know! I have not been a fool for years. I can go to-night from here to Raversham and smash your whole scheme of things, you and your pack of fanatics, your desert wolves calling to Allah, Allah!"

About her velvet-swathed throat there closed suddenly tightening fingers which choked the words on her lips. Somber, stately, imperturbable, Kali stood behind her, his dark face serene and questioning as he met Zaradi's eyes beyond the Frenchwoman. The Egyptian made a gesture for release, and Zélie sank shuddering among the divan's cushions, her dark eyes gleaming like twin sparks of smoldering fire in the semidarkness.

The two men faced each other now, as Zaradi rose expectantly.

"I did not trust Sadek, but went myself. While he was on the dahabeah between four and six we searched his rooms and found nothing."

Zaradi's lips appeared to roll under tightly in compression. Slowly the dark color rose under his olive skin as he sought to penetrate the mind of the Arab for truth.

"Between four and six, and you come here to report to me at ten. You dined with Mantzon." The words came sharply now, like staccato reports. "You follow your own road, Kali. You walk on hidden knives. What bargain have you made with those who carry torches? Mantzon is Russia's spy."

"I bargain not." Kali's black eyes seemed to set in their deep sockets, the muscles of his lean, narrow face working in repression.

"You are a desert trader. You would sell your father's dead body for enough gold to fill a goat hide. What did you find out?"

Kali's fierce gaze shifted to the cowering woman on the divan.

"Fromelin has fled across the desert to Algeria," he said with deliberate intent. "He will be killed before he reaches the edge of the sunrise."

"Ah, but you lie, you lie," she flung back at him.

"I do not lie," he said quietly. "Le-moine is in his place to-night, here in Cairo. Your palace is occupied, madame."

Zélie rose, her fingers pressed tightly to her temples, bravado gone from her manner, her face aging under its enamel.

"I did not believe you, Zaradi," she said slowly. "I did not think you would dare to act so soon. You have betrayed me for this other woman, Jacqueline Tavarin, because you hope to fool her into handing over to Islam her Mosul interests. Do I not know you all, you desert jackals! Was I not right when I guessed that she had gone herself into the desert to ruin André? You could not deceive me. You gave her the proofs against him yourself to win her support. Oh, I have been here in Cairo too many years not to know your methods! I tell you now, she has fooled you both. She stole the Drake letter herself from Braxton's room."

She threw the accusation out with

triumph and waited. Zaradi did not even glance at her.

"The Drake letter was delivered by the American to Lord Raversham at twenty minutes of nine to-night," he said slowly. "When he left the hotel to go to the dahabeah he placed the envelope with enclosures in the hotel safe. An English clerk was on duty. We could not reach it. When he returned he dressed for dinner, went down to the office, and received the letter intact from the safe. He gave it himself into Lord Raversham's hands before the reception."

The two stared at him in disbelief. Kali was the first to recover himself. He drew from the folds of his robe Naida's yellow satin mule, and set it on the olivewood desk with subtle satisfaction.

"Even to Zaradi the Just there must come moments of enlightenment," he said quickly. "This was found by me locked in the trunk of Braxton."

Zélie seized it exultantly in her two hands, holding it high in the air as she laughed.

"I gave it to Naida myself. Your little innocent lotus blossom of the Nile, who has been trained to obey, to take my place! Why was she in the American's rooms? By your orders, Zaradi? It is not kind of you, Kali, to break the faith of our old friend here, in the beautiful child he has trained so carefully, so cleverly. It appears she acts for herself sometimes, like any other woman, when she has the interest of the man she *loves* at heart."

Zaradi was silent for a minute's time, lost apparently in deep contemplation. He walked to the edge of the terrace outside the upper room, back and forth under the deep sapphire sky, smoking quietly, his eyes half closed. The two waited for him in silence, but with clashing gaze of mutual hatred. When he returned his tone was low and deliberate.

"The folly of man or woman must not be confused with the hour's needs. You will remain here, Zélie, until the night is past and this report of Fromelin's flight confirmed. If it is true, they will seek to arrest you. He has sold out France for his own gain, sold secrets of state to me, to England, to Russia, to whoever would buy from him, and turned again to betray those who paid him. Your intimacy with him will involve you."

"Has Lord Raversham the Drake letter?" asked Kali.

"I have already sent for it," Zaradi answered.

"You do not trust me?"

"I will not pay you your price."

The two men looked deep into each other's eyes, checking words before the woman, who listened eagerly. Kali suddenly swept the end of his burnoose over one shoulder.

"Since I can be of no further service to Achmed Zaradi," he said haughtily, "I shall depart from Cairo for the desert to-morrow."

"Not to-morrow, nor to-morrow, nor to-morrow," Zaradi returned with heavy finality. "And you will see that the American passes safely to where he came from."

"May one check Kismet?" Kali made his salutation of farewell gravely to both—to Zaradi with hidden challenge of power, to Zélie with sardonic grace. He left the upper room, passed down the staircase to the deserted café, out through the moonlit courtyard. As he started down the final flight of stone steps his feet encountered a form, rolled in a rug, sleeping across the entrance. He kicked it with a muttered curse, thinking it was Haddad. The bundle stirred.

The Agha scrambled to his knees, seizing the flowing ends of the burnoose fast in his hands, pouring out a flood of words about the man who had so nearly killed him at the House of Stars

when he strove to prevent his entering the quarters of the women.

Kali struck him across the mouth to silence him, fearing his voice might penetrate to the upper room. Continuing on his way, he emerged from the café and strolled down the Street of Pomegranates, west toward the Nile, through old Cairo, the bulk of the slave staggering heavily after him, still muttering of the man with the strength of an elephant who had flung him over his shoulder.

Kali showed no sign of listening. Zaradi had discounted his services, had insulted him before the Frenchwoman. The answer was plain to him, simple to follow out. He himself had brought the girl Naida from Daid-el-Marar nine years before, and had delivered her to Zaradi. He had made no secret of his love for her. He had served Zaradi faithfully, on the unspoken assumption that Naida was to be his ultimate reward.

Now that he had failed to secure the Raversham letter, he felt that Zaradi intended throwing him aside as he had Zélie, his usefulness gone, his pledge on the girl broken. To Zaradi the welfare of Islam was the one paramount issue in life. All human interests were to be sacrificed to it. But in Kali ran Bedouin blood, lawless, desert born. The ancient primal law was all he knew, to take what he wanted from life, to fight to the death for it. He would go to the House of Stars and kill the American, then carry off Naida to the hidden fastnesses of the mountains beyond the desert, where even Zaradi's power could never reach.

"I cannot go faster," cried the Agha with moans of pain. "My back is broken in a thousand pieces, my veins are on fire."

"You shall throw your enemy down the well of swords before daybreak," Kali assured him. "Faster, to the river."

CHAPTER XIV.

After the reception Raversham had retired to his own suite with a certain definite intent ahead of him. His mind had pondered on the Drake letter during the entire evening. The secret-ink theory seemed possible. If not that, then a tracing of where the writing paper had been procured. It had been of a fine rice quality, he had noticed in holding it, not the heavy linen bond used by foreign offices.

Of the sincerity of Barry Braxton he held opinion in abeyance. Americans were emotional where their sympathies were aroused, he had observed. They acted as individuals rather than as representatives of a nation, once their emotions were involved. It complicated one's fixed estimates at crucial moments, like attempting to play chess with frogs.

He smiled in appreciation of his own simile. Frogs for chessmen. Exactly. Ridiculous, but unfortunately peculiarly fitting. They refused to be classified, Americans, to be standardized, to use one of their own favorite expressions. Drake was doing fairly well, acting as a stabilizing influence at the Porte, yet why had he entrusted so important a letter to a young man with the quixotic reactions of this Braxton, liable to become diverted at the precise moment when he should keep his eye on the ball, as it were?

He dismissed his man for the night after disrobing and donning a dressing gown. Lady Edenham stepped to his door with her latest mail from home, and on the plea of weariness he asked her to defer its reading until morning. She had hesitated, had watched him with perplexed solicitude as he relaxed into an easy lounging posture in the deep leather chair beside the table.

"You shouldn't be all alone here, Jack. It makes me terribly nervous. There's a queer tension in the air, es-

pecially against us. I've been coming to Cairo for years, back and forth, and this is the first time I have encountered antagonism even in the manner of the merchants of the bazaars."

"Nonsense, Hattie." He smiled up at her cheerfully. "Run along, there's a dear old girl. I want to be by myself for a while."

"But you shouldn't be," she persisted. "Why don't you have Morton sleep on the couch? I've been hearing the most abominable things—about their methods, I mean, the way they have for removing any one whom they object to. Invisible murder, that's what it is, Jack. You remember Forbes—and Demorest?"

"Fever and acute indigestion," he observed without glancing up. "Served them right for not taking proper precautions when they hit this climate."

"It was neither." She leaned her palms flat on the table, compelling him to meet her eyes. "They were poisoned secretly, Jack. It's known everywhere here in Cairo."

He considered for a few moments, his blond eyebrows slightly raised.

"And if they were?" he asked pleasantly. "We expect retaliation. England's means to an end here in the past few years have not been exactly calculated to make the Egyptians love us, have they? Give and take, you know, in this game. I think the whole mess is rather clearing up now, if they'll take a little medicine and behave. This other is only their way of getting even and irritating us, can't you see? Good night, dear."

"How long will you be here?" she persisted.

"I'm not sure. It all depends."

"On Barry Braxton getting back by to-morrow night?"

He looked up at her in mock despair.

"My dear Harriet, even you? Would you mind telling me what there is about Mr. Braxton that is particularly interesting or appealing to your sympathies?"

"I don't know." She considered the question musingly. "He's a very nice sort of a boy to begin with, seems clean and decent and all that. And Jacqueline Tavarin's rather keen on his making good for Drake."

"How does Jacqueline know of it? Read it, I presume, in her little crystal ball." His tone was laconic.

"She seems to know everything that goes on out here. And you needn't make a joke of it, Jack. I'm deadly serious. She told me that his life is in great danger here, and she's—"

"A very interesting and unsettled state of mind," he teased. "Good night, dear."

"But where do you suppose he has gone? It's the first thing Jacqueline will demand to know as soon as she gets back."

"There's plenty of time," he said placidly.

"But there is not. I've just received this from her and she'll be here before morning."

He took the folded sheet of notepaper and opened it out, glancing at the few lines written in the countess' large flowing handwriting. She was quite well, and would be at the hotel in time to breakfast with Lady Edenham. He fingered the sheet of paper musingly, holding it up between himself and the lamplight.

"What do you think of it, Jack?" she asked.

"Curious, very curious," he granted. "Invite her to breakfast with us at eight. Do you mind if I keep this to-night?"

"I detest mystery," she declared. "Why do you want her letter? Don't be so beastly secretive with me, Jack."

"Good night, Harriet." He rose with a smile and led her toward the door himself with an air of final dismissal. After she had gone he locked the door and returned to the examination of the two letters. Certainly the paper was

the same in both communications. And rice paper was used by the Egyptians in preference to the English bond. He decided to use an extracting fluid on the one Barry had brought, to see what might be disclosed.

At the same moment, twenty-two minutes after twelve, the Countess Tavarin reached the west terminus of the lower Nile bridge after seven hours' journey from the desert beyond Gizeh. She took leave of the old Arab dragoman who had accompanied her. Her face held a light of confidence and success. As the car which awaited her turned from the Cairo end up the long thoroughfare toward the foreign quarter she smiled to herself, leaning back for the first time in utter relaxation, visioning what lay just ahead of her, the guaranteed safety of Barry Braxton.

She would wait until morning, she thought. Or no, it was the night of the Raversham reception. She would arrive too late to attend, but Barry would be surely there. He would not have gone to his own rooms before one at least. She would merely send him word that she had returned. He would surely understand and come to her.

She gave orders for the car to drive around to the private entrance on the palm-shadowed side street, where she might go into the hotel unobserved. Possibly she would let Harriet know that she was safe, just a line on a card sent up to her by a page. She scribbled one in the lift, and had it sent after she had gone to her own suite.

It seemed amazing to her as she stood there, her silk cloak on the floor, still in her riding suit, dusty and travel-stained, amazing that she alone could have accomplished all that she had set out to do, that she had even possessed the influence which had carried her through this crisis safely and securely.

She called Barry through the office, and received word back that Mr. Brax-

ton had left the hotel shortly before ten and had not returned. Had Lord Raversham arrived she asked? The affirmative answer was prompt. She hesitated at calling the Hays' suite; yet it seemed the only thing to do if she was to locate Barry immediately. She did it daringly, hoping that Rosamond was not there. If any one would know where Barry had gone, it would be Hays, she thought.

Peggie paused to reply, as she stood brushing out her long brown hair before the mirror, thrilled when the countess gave her name. Yes, Mr. Hays was in the grill, she believed, with friends. Perhaps Mr. Braxton was with them. She would call and ask her husband to let the countess know in turn.

When the message reached Tom he grinned across the table at Henri Mantzon.

"You'll excuse me while I see what she wants?"

Mantzon's face flushed. He detained Tom with a grip on his sleeve.

"Pardon, you are too abrupt. Tell her I am here, I must see her at once. I am in her confidence."

"Like hell you are!" responded Tom affably. "Then why have you been trying to pump me for the past half hour, to find out where she had gone?"

"If you will but tell her that I am here in Cairo——"

"Tell her yourself. Call her up when I get through talking to her. My dear fellow, you won't get me mixed up in any of these doings. You'll all play your own game without any advice or assistance from T. Hays. I've never met the lady that I know of, but if she wants to speak to me, I'm at the end of the wire."

He sauntered to the lift and went up to the third landing, turning toward the countess' suite next to Lady Edenham's. It was on the inner side of the hotel overlooking the tea garden. Lord Raversham's suite faced the front, over-

looking the street, and occupied the west corner.

As Tom passed the intersecting corridors he encountered a young, olive-skinned boy carrying a tray with one empty glass on it, and a reed-bound bottle of wine. He was dressed in white like the other room waiters, but there was something furtive in his glance as he passed, which caught Tom's suspicion. He looked back as the boy slipped out of sight down the servants' staircase, speculating on what lay behind his evident desire to avoid him. Still, they all looked about alike, he assured himself, passing on. Reticent, meerschaum-tinted mysteries, all of them. Swathed in cotton or silk, it was all the same; they irritated and mystified him.

The countess responded to his ring herself, opening the outer door of the little reception vestibule, greeting him with the assurance of the queen who can do no wrong.

She had changed her riding suit for a hostess gown of loose pale-green velvet, heavily embroidered in gold thread, belted low with a Persian girdle of flat jade and tourmaline set in gold. Tom's mental conclusion was that she was a thoroughbred. She did not ask him to be seated, but stood beside him near the open windows, her lovely eyes brilliant with suppressed excitement.

"I have sent for you, Mr. Hays, because you happen to be Mr. Braxton's friend, and I cannot find him to-night. It is very imperative for his own safety that I see him. I have news for him."

"But I can't find him myself," answered Tom flatly. "That's why I'm hanging around the grill, expecting him to walk in any minute. He only showed up at the reception to-night for about two minutes."

"Did he see Lord Raversham?" Her tone was low and eager.

"Yes," he told her significantly. "He saw him. He had dinner with him.

I haven't talked to Barry myself since yesterday around five. I met him at Madame de Marigny's house-boat tea."

"He shouldn't have gone there!" she exclaimed. "Oh, but he is no inexperienced!"

"Yes," Tom said appreciatively. "I agree with you. I didn't care much for the lady myself. She seems to be a picturesque detail one would hardly miss from the general effect."

"She is the worst influence we French have to contend with here in Egypt. She has betrayed France ruthlessly as she has England, for years, whenever it has suited her purpose. She became the favorite of Fromelin deliberately to learn his secrets and sell them. Later on, she taught him to traffic in state affairs. I have to-night come straight from the desert council of the highest authorities in Egyptian politics at this hour, the men who are making history here, building up a nation out of a fomenting mass of tribal entities. And I have seen the Fromelin's influence repudiated and denounced. Fromelin himself is a fugitive at this moment, making for the north coast over the desert."

Tom's gray eyes gleamed in admiration.

"Some marksmanship!" he said as man to man. "How did you wing him?"

"How?" She relaxed with a little laugh. "I went myself to their council as a hostage from France. I gave myself up to them with all the interests that I control, as surely that my words were true. And I had some help, too, from Ahmed Zaradi. I may tell you this in confidence as Barry's friend. Fromelin was there before me. He had lied to them as usual, led them to believe they were being tricked on this new agreement, that England would not keep her assurances and pledges, and that France was too weak to interfere."

"Well, that's about it, isn't it?" Tom asked simply. "That's the way I get it, on the lowdown here from men I

deal with in a business way. Supposing that England does clear out of here, what difference does it make, if she hangs on to the Soudan and Suez? She can squeeze the daylights out of Egypt any time she likes with that nutcracker."

The countess' white arms flashed upward suddenly, widely.

"Look beyond," she said eagerly, "always beyond the present. What is today or even to-morrow? If we gain this much, we may catch our breath and temporize. France loves this land. She knows the East. She has nurtured it like a mother, and she treats its people as brothers. To the English they were inferiors. I may not talk freely." She checked herself abruptly, crossing to a small, inlaid desk. From a locked drawer, she drew out a narrow folded paper, the same as that on which her message to Lady Edenham had been written.

"That is safe conduct for Barry wherever he may go in Egypt," she said, the color rising delicately to her pale face. "Signed as you see by the Said himself. I begged it from them, bargaining with them to get it, so that his life shall be spared no matter how he blunders."

Tom stared at the sheet of paper, at the small, irregular Arabic characters covering so small a space, unintelligible to his eyes, but all powerful to any follower of Islam.

"It's great," he said simply. "But what's the good of it? I'm sure the boy has already skipped. I've hunted for him for three hours, and he's gone."

"Not so soon." She looked up at him blankly. "He could not have left Cairo. Have you been to the Café l'Orient, to Zaradi's even? That is where he is, probably, at Zaradi's café. Do you know the place?"

"No, but Mantzon does," said Tom thoughtfully.

"Mantzon!" she repeated. "He is here." She smiled slowly, a beautiful

smile of perfect assurance and triumph. "He will find the way to the desert a hazardous one, I fear. Still, he pretends to be Barry's friend, and would go with you to the café if I ask him."

She moved toward the telephone on the desk, when there suddenly came the beating of two palms against the outer panels of the corridor door. Lady Edenham's voice called her name frantically. The countess hurried to open the door widely, in time to catch the half-fainting Englishwoman in her arms. Supporting her with Tom's assistance to the couch, they gave her a swallow of brandy, and she murmured brokenly, shuddering:

"They've murdered Jack! I could not sleep. I felt he was in danger. I just went to his rooms, and he is dead!" she moaned. "Oh, my God! I warned him it would come! And there's nothing, not a sign of how they did it! He sits there just as I left him, reading. The light is on beside his chair, the cigarette has just fallen from his fingers. I thought he was asleep, and I touched his hand. It was ice cold, and he was dead!"

"Please wait just a minute," Tom begged. "Tell me where he is. Don't make a disturbance. Don't let them think you've found out yet."

"I will stay here with her," the countess said quietly. "Go to the corner suite to the left, Mr. Hays."

And by an unforeseen twist in the line of chance, against his will or intention, Tom Hays found himself caught in Cairo's golden web of tragic mystery. As he turned the corridor leading to the rooms of the British special commissioner, he remembered the Berber boy with the wine tray whom he had seen coming from there not twenty minutes before. Rigor mortis would not set in in twenty minutes, he thought grimly. There was a kink in the affair somewhere.

He found the double doors to the

suite unlocked. In the large, winged, English armchair, turned to face the flat-topped desk, sat Lord Raversham. He seemed to be engrossed in what lay before him, two small dark-green bottles with white rubber corks, each with a glass-pointed stylus. This was all except for the red blotter on the desk itself which bore no imprint.

There was a peculiar odor in the room, like perfumed gas. Tom placed his hand beneath the other's chin, and found it cold and rigid as he tried to lift the head. Yet the neck muscles had not set. Lifting the waxen eyelids, he found the pupils staring and set, but unfilmed by death. There was no pulse

beat to be detected; neither could he feel the slightest flutter of the heart. But the color remained in the thin, well-shaped lips.

With a quick suspicion, he bent his head lower and smelled of the half-opened mouth. The same sweet, gaseous odor was perceptible. Searching, he found a hand mirror on the dressing table of the inner room, and held it above the stricken man's lips. A faint mist formed. Tom grunted with relief.

"Not so bad, old man," he muttered quietly. And, lifting the heavy body in his arms, he carried it into the bedroom and laid it on the couch.

TO BE CONTINUED.



EGYPTIAN women have dropped the veil. Will the reputation of Egyptian beauty persist, or was elusiveness its chief charm?



IN order to determine the most becoming coiffure for her, a recent débutante had a series of silhouettes made of her profile, with her hair variously arranged. It is seldom that an artist has an opportunity to influence the hairdresser's art in such an unusual way.



WEdding rings as well as clothes are subject to the changes of fashion. Formerly the ring weighed nine pennyweights, was broad, flat, smooth, and was made of bright gold. Now it is one third that weight, narrow, carved, and made of platinum or white gold. The favorite carving is the arbutus pattern which, designed for a well-known New York society girl, proved so popular that it is now a standard design. Individuals often give strange orders for wedding rings. Gypsies sometimes wish to put all the gold they possess into the ring, and the result is a cylinder three or four inches in depth.



THE present vogue for jade ornaments directs attention to their creation. In China when an unusually large piece of jade is found, a council of artists is called to determine into what shape it should be carved, since the carving must follow the outline indicated by the natural formation of the specimen. The artist chosen for the delicate task is thereby highly honored, and if, after being subjected to public criticism for a whole year, his work is approved, he is richly rewarded. With a thin piece of brass wire the artist works patiently. Twenty years of patient labor is not regarded as too long for a single piece of carving.

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He Who Fights and Runs Away



By Barker Shelton

HE couldn't sleep. Lying on his right side was as bad as lying on his left side, and lying on his back was worse than either. Three long hours of counting clock ticks and visualizing sheep hopping over a fence had brought no better results than a steadily growing desire to flop about wildly like a man in a fit and to howl childishly at the top of his voice.

So Mitch Holcomb got up and switched on all the lights, and, although the night was fairly warm, touched off the gas log for what poor comfort it might lend to the dismal occasion. It did not lend any comfort at all because it began to make the room stuffy and annoyed him with its squeaky simmering. But he let it flicker away, and drew up a chair in front of it, and sat down in the chair and lighted a pipe. On the whole he was more miserable than he had been tossing about sleeplessly in bed. The little imps of self-reproach would not let up on him for a minute. He shrugged his shoulders as if he were saying: "Well, then, go to it! Do your worst!" Little imps of self-reproach need no second invitation of that kind.

He smoked away. The pipe would not draw well at times. It developed a wheeze that tried a duet with the asthmatic whistling of the gas log. A soulless clock in the darkness outside boomed another hour on a bell that made him jump when it sounded. It had been an amazingly slow hour in passing. And his troubled thought had taken him

around a circle to the exact place he had been an hour ago. He was getting nowhere.

He straightened his hunched shoulders and set up with a great air of determination. He was like a man who, after evading the issue uselessly for hours, had finally seen the wisdom of facing it. He couldn't get away from it longer. There it was, presenting itself in cold accusation at every mental corner around which he tried to dodge. Therefore, he'd meet it squarely, and do something about it, instead of trying to run away from it when he had proved conclusively to himself it could outfoot him every time.

He laid aside the pipe. It had gone out, anyway. He took a long breath which turned itself into a sigh of resignation. And there, before the gas log at the abysmal hour of three in the morning, Mitch Holcomb called into session a court wherein he had appointed himself judge, jury, and counsel for both the prosecution and the defense. Incidentally he was also the felon in the dock. Then he proceeded to try himself. The charge was inefficiency with intent to get rich. It was a foregone conclusion that the verdict would be "guilty." One can prove almost anything against oneself at three o'clock in the morning.

The verdict in, he sat with bent head awaiting sentence. There had been no plea for clemency. There seemed to be no valid argument for it. Mitch

Holcomb, the judge, looked upon Mitch Holcomb, the prisoner at the bar. Together they went over to a window and pulled aside the ~~curtains~~. Stars tried hard to show themselves in a hazy sky, but only the sturdier ones succeeded in braving effectively the glow of light that smudged itself upon the heavens. Across silhouetted roofs the dust-gray leaves on the tops of trees in a little square moved lazily in the wisp of breeze. Beyond them a shadowy tower with an illuminated clock dial near its top lorded it over the upper darkness.

The court pronounced sentence. Mitch Holcomb accepted it with a feeling of relief. Exile! That was it! Exile from this place that had done so many things to him, given him a plethora of emotions, tempted him, beaten him. Exile to a new start, a clearer, surer outlook. Exile without a dollar in his pocket to begin all over at a point so humble there would be peace and rest and quiet; days sufficient unto themselves, and to-morrows to be lived when they came and not heartbreakingly in advance in orgies of alternate hopes and fears.

From the bottom of his heart he thanked the court for the justice of that sentence. He turned away from the window. He shut off the gas log. He would now proceed at once to wind up his tangled affairs, which were on the point of winding themselves up of their own accord unless he did something of the sort immediately. In the exile which had just been pronounced upon him he would find at least a semblance of peace he had not known for months and months.

Mitch went back to bed. He fell asleep. He slept until well into the morning. The sentence passed upon him in that earlier morning hour was the first thought to assail his half-awake senses. He began to frown, came into full wakefulness, and grinned. He came out of bed as if the day looked good

to him and he was eager to get after it. He whistled as he dressed. He couldn't remember when he had last whistled as he dressed.

Winding up his affairs was no very difficult nor lengthy task. The simplicity of the proceeding told all too plainly the present condition of the said affairs. By four o'clock that afternoon the Holcomb Publicity Bureau had passed to the realm of those things which are only unpleasant memories. The superintendent of the building where its late offices had been located was showing the same to a gentleman who dealt in securities. A bank account that looked quite comfortable until it had suffered from the inroads of outstanding bills was withdrawn to its last cent. The extent of the financial bulwark between Mitch and a world ready to take advantage of him was seventy-eight dollars and sixty-two cents.

That there should happen to be enough left out of the wreck for one last evening with Anne Warren was most gratifying. He had been afraid there might not remain sufficient for even that sorry valedictory. But now the bills were paid, the affairs brought to a finish, and the seventy-eight dollars and sixty-two cents were his beyond any possible doubt or any stretching of his conscience.

So Mitch stepped into the nearest hotel and called up Bruce Duncan. Bruce Duncan and Mrs. Duncan were the necessary evils of the prospective party. Anne Warren was Mrs. Duncan's sister.

If it hadn't been for Anne Warren, he would not have found himself in his present predicament. He cordially detested a man who shifted the responsibility of his own failure on to anybody else's shoulders, particularly on to the shoulders of a woman. The tortures of the Inquisition could not have dragged a hint of anything of that sort from him. He tried his best to stop

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such admissions even to himself. But a small, insistent voice kept chirping away at him despite all his good intentions.

But for Anne he would have kept right on with the sure thing he had in the publicity department of the concern in which Bruce Duncan was such a conspicuous success. There wasn't any very bright and immediate future in the publicity department of that concern. But there was a very comfortable salary in it for Mitch and a splendid chance for sound training in publicity of the right kind. Mitch had taken to the publicity game as a mouse takes to cheese. He had eaten it up and howled for more. He felt he was in the job he fitted. He was satisfied—before he and Bruce were thrown so much together and each found so much in the other to like.

Bruce had taken Mitch home to dinner with him, and Mitch had beheld Anne. To behold Anne was to be lost. Mitch felt very much lost. He felt more so after he had run about a great deal with the Duncans, with Anne always one of the party. He felt beyond the pale in his present state, an outsider, because it had taken him no very great time to make two highly important and highly disturbing discoveries: that Anne Warren was a very warm-hearted and lovely and understanding little lady, and that Anne Warren was destined for some man as successful as Bruce, if not by Anne's own volition, which seemed at times quite pointedly the case, at least by Mrs. Duncan's. She had learned the value of a rising and successful husband and would tolerate nothing less for her sister.

The more these fundamental truths sank into his understanding, the more dissatisfied Mitch became. He thought things over with a thoroughness which was almost painful. No chance for him to go up the line fast and make money hand over fist in his present job as Bruce had done at another end of the

game. But he did fancy, not without justification, that he knew the publicity game from A to Z. Now if he was worth what he was to the concern he worked for, he surely must be worth much more to himself. You got along in this world by grabbing a chance when you saw it. Sure things were very comfortable, but fatal in time to one's initiative. Bruce did not let anything kill his initiative, did he? He did not.

And so Mitch looked into Anne Warren's eyes one night when they were particularly lovely and understanding, and thought he found a little pity for himself in them, a hint of that "now-if-you-were-only-a-little - more - energetic-and-successful-man" stuff that has overturned empires many times in history. Immediately thereafter he gathered together all his available funds and launched out for himself. If one looked into Anne Warren's eyes and saw what he had seen in them that night, it was a case of sink or swim. There couldn't be any halfway measures about it.

His available funds were in the main the remnant of the Holcomb family fortune—much depleted, it is true—to which he had fallen heir on his twenty-first birthday. They weren't anywhere near what he could have wished them to be for his purpose, but with courage and a good front he thought he could keep afloat until things came to him in a satisfyingly large fashion.

To the world he had put up a brave front. He had done it so well that he found Bruce changing his attitude toward him from that of merely one good fellow to another to that deeper intimacy which offers confidences and seeks advice. Mrs. Duncan, too, began to look upon him with decidedly more favor. With the mantle of success enveloping him as it enveloped Bruce, he found himself by Mrs. Duncan's clever machinations much more alone with Anne.

Anne herself was much the same as

ever. She did not make any outward show of rejoicing over what he was doing. Sometimes he found her looking at him queerly, not wholly with approval, he fancied. He wondered if she, the only one of the three to do so, read through his sham to the unpleasant verities beneath it, and realized that this brave front of his was only a brave front after all; that the none too ample funds he had been able to throw into the venture were dwindling alarmingly; that he was making heavy weather of it with still worse conditions looming unhappily in the too immediate future.

He was straining every nerve to keep up outward appearances. It was a common enough procedure in the touch-and-go world in which he found himself. You threw the front for all you were worth, and sat tight, and worked hard and hoped harder, and by and by you came through. He saw samples of it about him every day. The front seemed to count more than the work or the hope. So Mitch continued to work it overtime, and to wonder how much Anne Warren knew of the truth. He couldn't help being afraid at times that she knew too much of it; yet he respected her insight vastly more than he did that of Bruce and Mrs. Duncan, who took it for granted things were as they looked from the outside, and patted him on the back, and said they had always known he'd get there big, and let it go at that.

Thus he had gone right on up to the last moment, and practically his last cent, hoping for the big break to come to him, which was the way you had to do, as he had learned. But the big break hadn't come. It was all over now. He had faced failure, and admitted its presence in his bailiwick. One thing about it, he wouldn't have to stand the strain of hoping against such fearful odds again. The hardest part of being a fizzle is to bring yourself to the point of confessing to yourself you are such. He had done

his confessing. He experienced a queer sort of relief which he felt should have been shame but just wouldn't be. This one last evening with Anne and this particular chapter of his life would be closed.

His reasons for wanting that last evening with Anne were somewhat jumbled. He threw chivalry and decency to the winds and listened to the disturbing and insistent voice which he had long ago pretended to ignore. He told himself he wanted to see her and realized that but for her he would never have taken the first disastrous step away from his sure-thing position, and then depart into outer darkness with a better resignation because of this. This he promptly discarded as wholly unfair to her and to himself and unworthy of them both as well. Then he tried to make himself believe he was going to tell her the whole bitter truth about the bust-up. But he knew, even as he considered it, he wouldn't do it. He decided to let it go that he wanted a last fling which would send him into exile without a copper in his pocket. That seemed the best explanation of all. Perhaps it was the best because it was the most colorless and the farthest from the truth. Anyway, he wanted that evening with her.

He got Bruce Duncan on the wire. No, Bruce didn't know of anything particular on for that evening. He'd call up the house and see what the girls had to say. Where was Mitch? All right, stick around there for a minute or two until he got the house and then he'd call Mitch up.

Mitch arranged himself in a comfortable leather chair near the telephone booths. In five minutes Bruce was calling him. Nothing on, Bruce announced. They were open for any sort of jamboree he might have in mind. Dinner at Terrelli's and a little dancing? Fine! Couldn't be better! The missus and Anne would be tickled to death, he was

sure. Yep! Eight thirty would be agreeable to all hands. They'd meet Mitch at Terrelli's, then, at half past eight.

At the appointed hour Mitch was waiting for them at Terrelli's. He had never been so keenly eager for anything in his life as he was for this evening's fun. A we-about-to-die feeling gave zest to the occasion. A man he knew once told him of how good the last piece of pilot bread had tasted to him when he was with a party lost in the Canadian woods. Mitch appreciated the taste of that last piece of pilot bread now.

He had reserved one of the most desirable tables next the dancing space. He had decided, since this was the last evening of the old life, his last occasion to throw the front, to wind up in a blaze of glory, forget everything else save that he was here, alive, and that before him was the very sort of evening he could most desire, if he had his pick of all the evenings that ever had been or ever would be. To-night, the last of such nights, he'd cut loose and do his best to make things go big.

It was in such a spirit that Mitch Holcomb greeted his guests as they rolled up in the new limousine that Bruce had bought Mrs. Duncan for her birthday present. At one of the queer, Oriental windows by the main entrance he was watching for them. He crossed the sidewalk to the car. Bruce hailed him in that breezy, half-blustering, wholly affectionate manner in which Bruce always greeted his friends. Mrs. Duncan was frankly eager for the evening's fun. Anne was even quieter than usual. But, as he might have expected of a girl like her whom he would see to-night probably for the last time, much lovelier than usual, too.

He walked back to the Moorish entrance with Mrs. Duncan.

"Another killing, Mitch?" she asked.

"That's it," he told her. "I ^{he} couldn't

help wondering what would happen if he went into details as to just what sort of a killing it was.

"And this is the celebration, of course?"

"The libation to the gods. Yes."

"I'm glad of that. It's always heaps of fun to go to dinner with you, Mitch; but the dinners that celebrate another step upward are somehow always best. I'm awfully glad this is one of that kind. I'm just in the mood for a real evening."

"So am I," he told her. He smothered what started out to be a sigh. "And therefore, we'll just have one."

He was as good as his promise. Mitch Holcomb, ready for a lively evening, knew how to keep things from stagnating for even a moment. And Bruce and his wife were no mean seconds to such efforts. Anne's mood was the only thing he would have changed if he could.

He would have liked her a little gayer, a little nearer, a trifle more prettily intimate, as he had seen her on a few, all-too-rare occasions. He wanted everything perfect this last night. At times he had experienced a strange feeling that Anne was on another planet, even when she was close beside him. Ever since he had known her that odd sense of her aloofness, her remoteness, had come to him now and again. It was there to-night; something about her was detached, unapproachable. True, she was laughing and talking like the others at the table; to all outward appearances Mitch was very near and very dear to her. Whatever conversational cue was presented she followed with a fairly dazzling mental alacrity. There were little sidelong glances now and then which apparently were for Mitch, and for Mitch alone. He knew they meant nothing at all; not when he had the uncomfortable knowledge that she was looking at him and talking to him from the very ends of the earth. This was the same Anne Warren who could

be wonderfully sympathetic and close and understanding when she chose, who could let *you* know in a thousand unobtrusive ways that no one in the vicinity mattered 'save *you* alone. Why wasn't she that way to-night? Well, of course she didn't know he was singing his swan song.

A little later, when Bruce and Anne were dancing and he and Mrs. Duncan were tripping a pre-entrée measure, she looked up at him with a funny little smile of anxiety. Mrs. Duncan was the sort of person who could ask the most frankly personal questions and get away with it. She asked him such a question now.

"Tell me, how are you making out with Anne?"

"I think you can tell me that better than I can tell you," he replied.

She frowned ever so slightly, but it did not escape his eyes.

"I wish I might," she said in a way which made the words very much like a sigh.

The music came to an end in one of those overgrown up roarers shot through with catcalls that make jazz what it is.

"I really wish I might, Mitch," she repeated, and there was an added and friendly pressure of the hand on his arm.

They went back to their table. Something very funny, which at the same time wasn't funny at all, struck Mitch. Supposing he had been all wrong from the start! Supposing he had been entertaining the suspicion that it was merely a matter of money and success and that sort of thing that was necessary to win him a way to Anne Warren's heart, and that even with money and success and all that went with it, Anne could never really consider him seriously! Supposing he had plunged and tried desperately to swim and eventually had succeeded only in sinking miserably, all for an end which never could have been, anyway! That

wouldn't be without a certain stinging humor to it, and tragedy as well, and a general messiness all round.

He looked at Anne with a sudden new interest. Whatever inklings of deeper affection she had given him were the vaguest sort of inklings, he reflected. Perhaps he had fed himself on crumbs and mistaken those crumbs for the loaf. Perhaps, all in all, it was better this way than the other. It was bad enough to be the fizzle he was, but the fact that it never could have been, anyway, might prove a counterirritant to his wounds. He felt the vague darkness of his coming exile. Whatever it might hold in store for him would be more bearable under such circumstances. The bitterness of losing out in the game he had tried to play would be softened by the thought that he never could have won the prize he was playing for. Queer logic, no doubt. But Mitch was in that frame of mind when anything savoring of logic that would help him, queer or otherwise, looked fearfully good to him.

The thought persisted until it became an obsession. He was supposed to have succeeded. Bruce thought he was going strong and so did Mrs. Duncan. Did Anne see through him? Did she know the truth about him? Or was it that she thought his venture as much a howling success as her sister and her brother-in-law considered it, and still just couldn't see Mitch as a possibility? It occurred to him that somehow or other he'd got to know the answers to those questions. He just couldn't drop out forever with no definite answer to them.

They finished the salad. Bruce and Mrs. Duncan sailed away in a fox-trot. Anne gave the little pats to her hair with which she always favored it before she danced. But Mitch Holcomb made no move to rise. Instead he leaned across the table.

He began to speak earnestly, in lowered tones. His idea was to find out, adroitly, with the greatest caution, the

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correct answers to those questions which were haunting him. That was what he intended to do. But somehow things got out of hand. He was neither adroit nor cautious. Before he realized the enormity of what he was doing, he was asking her to marry him. He started suddenly, aghast at what he was saying. He tried to pull up. He had gone too far already to pull up. He was making matters worse. So he stumbled through with it. Then he sat there, decidedly ill at ease, waiting for her answer.

The only thing about Anne that had changed were her eyes. They brightened, widened, looked at him for one brief moment with infinite tenderness. He felt all the sap of life oozing out of his fingers and toes. For one horrible minute he could see himself trying to make it clear to her that he was not what she thought him, nor what Bruce and Mrs. Duncan and every one else thought him; that he was a four-flusher, a fizzle, a failure, penniless or nearly so when he had settled the score for this evening. He could see himself stammering out some such explanation, red-faced, feeling in every fiber of his body what an unutterable mess he had made of everything; those eyes of hers growing distant and frightened and finally accusing as she listened to him.

But nothing of the sort was necessary. She bowed her head. The light of infinite tenderness went out of her eyes. She said, very softly, yet very distinctly:

"Mitch, I'm quite fond of you in a way. I'm tremendously proud of you and of what you've done. Who wouldn't be? But that—that is wholly impossible."

When the average man proposes to the average girl of his choice he is not inclined to favor a turndown. Mitch Holcomb, however, seemed at that moment to have felt a great weight lifted from him. He looked like a man who had been pardoned as he started to mount the scaffold.

"Thank you!" he said. He said it with great fervor. He hadn't meant to say it at all. It slipped out in the general relief of the moment. The girl stared at him as if she must be mistaken in what she had heard.

"What a funny thing to say under the circumstances!" she said. "What a fearfully queer thing to say!"

"I was thinking wholly of you." He tried to explain that misplaced gratitude of his. "I was merely thanking you for your eminent good sense. I don't quite know how to make it clear to you, but what I'm trying to bring out is that your happiness is far more to me than my own. And because that is so, I want to congratulate you for what you just had the good sense to say."

She seemed puzzled for a moment. Then her face cleared. Her lips curled the slightest bit.

"I think perhaps I am to be congratulated," she said very slowly.

"You are," he agreed. "To a greater extent than you realize," he added.

When the evening was over, when Mitch was saying good night to them, when he had refused their offer to set him down at his own apartments, Anne managed to steal a word alone with him, while the others were climbing into the car.

"You won't let what happened tonight make any difference with you about coming to the house, will you? You won't avoid me?" she asked.

"I think I'd better keep away," he said.

She looked as if she were about to protest, but before she could speak he had made the statement stronger.

"I shall just have to keep away," he told her.

He knew she thought she understood his position quite thoroughly. But he knew also she did not understand it at all.

He stood quite still at the curb edge

for some minutes after Mrs. Duncan's birthday-present car had rolled away. The last thing he had seen or did see for the next few clock ticks was Anne's face, flushed, pitying, a trifle accusing, looking at him from one of the windows. The car was out of sight when he pulled himself together sharply.

Just up the Avenue was a string of waiting taxis; their chauffeurs were dozing or reading or swapping weird stories according to their respective tastes. Mitch pulled out the bills and the handful of change which represented his worldly assets after the bill at Terrelli's was settled and counted them. He stepped to the nearest taxi and opened the door. The pilot of that particular craft, who happened to be of the dozing variety, roused himself.

"Where to, sir?" he inquired.

"North," Mitch instructed him.

"North what?"

"Pole, if you've got the time and the gas."

"Huh?"

"Start north. Take any thoroughfare that goes in that general direction. Keep going until I tell you to stop."

The chauffeur blinked and grinned and started the car. They went up the Avenue, north. They crossed a bridge, north. Granite and brick and asphalt gave way to wood and shade trees and tarvia. Mitch kept his eye on the meter. They paused at a little outlying garage to fill a depleted tank. The chauffeur opened the door.

"Much farther?" he sought information.

"Two dollars and seventy-six cents' worth," said Mitch.

The taximeter began clicking up charges again. It was rapidly approaching the amount Mitch had taken from his pocket and counted three times to make sure of it. Presently he must, perforce, call a halt. The car took the initiative in this matter, however. It slowed down, gave a few hectic coughs,

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and died in a village square. There was a flagstaff shooting up from a plot of grass in the center of that square, and blocks of small shops on either side of it. The chauffeur got out to hold the usual inquest. He lifted the hood. Mitch, too, alighted. It was the first infant hour of a summer Sunday morning.

"Busted?" Mitch inquired, stepping to the chauffeur's side.

"Uh-huh!"

"Queer coincident. So am I."

The chauffeur was a small man, but a wiry individual. He didn't look like the sort who would avoid either trouble or odds against him.

"Busted, hey? After chasin' me out to these jungles! See here now, fella—"

"Calm yourself!" Mitch interrupted him. "I shall be busted after I settle with you. There's enough left for that. Here you are. What's over is yours."

The money in his pocket, to the last copper of it, was thrust into the other man's grimy paw. He ran it over.

"Thankee, sir!" he said in a different tone as he touched his cap.

He watched his late fare impersonally for a moment and with a perfunctory sort of interest as Mitch poked across the square. Then he went back to his defunct engine. Queer fish fell not infrequently into his net. Their business was their own. It was none of his, save to furnish the cops with a general description in case it was needed. He was taking out a spark plug, when Mitch, coming back, touched his arm.

"Happen to know what town this is?"

"Chester Village," the chauffeur enlightened him.

"Thanks. You'll be able to get her going again before long, won't you?"

"Leave it to me."

"I intend to. Good night."

He started across the square again. Penniless he was beginning that sentence of exile he had passed upon him.

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self. Knowing what he now did about Anne, and the futility of the whole affair from the very beginning of it, he was entering his exile with a better grace, a greater peace, than he had imagined would be the case. He plodded down the street which led from one end of the square in Chester Village. The joy of the uncertain was upon him. He wondered where, paraphrasing little *Tommy Tucker's* celebrated stunt, he would sing for his breakfast. There was a certain fascination about such speculation from the present angle when he was not yet hungry.

The Three Foxes, just beyond the square in Chester Village, is not what it was once. Its sounds of revelry by night are wan ghosts of the past which stalk only in the shadow land of memory. Its zenith has been passed. A certain Federal edict got in a solar-plexus wallop on the Three Foxes. Its proprietors, wise in their day and generation, perceiving what was coming even before it hit them, promptly put their property on the market. An astute real-estate broker had recently managed to wish it on to a hopeful party of much girth, named Quinn. Mr. Quinn saw only the cheapness of an inn that had been once a rare little money gleaner and the bargain at which the Three Foxes was offered to any one willing to take a chance on dispensing *filet mignon* minus champagne sauce and purveying extra-dry chicken dinners.

The color of the large nose of Mr. Quinn, its bulbous propensities, and the blotchy patches of red on either side of it would have suggested to the casual observer more sense on Mr. Quinn's part.

Mr. Quinn had encountered rough weather at the Three Foxes. He showed it and the inn showed it. But, blessed, or cursed, with an abnormal pig-headedness, he was fully convinced

that if he could hang on somehow through the rough weather, smoother sailing lay ahead of him. He was one of the few individuals with bulbous noses flanked by blotchy, red patches who still remained optimists in a period of general gloom.

Mitch Holcomb, poking down that street from the square, stumbled upon Mr. Quinn's white elephant. The swinging sign on a light pole in front of it, with the supposed likenesses of three members of the genus *vulpes* daubed upon it—two decently couchant and one impossibly rampant—needed paint. So did the inn itself. The vines, running riot all over it, cried aloud for a hair cut. A front gutter lopped down at an unpicturesque angle and more than one shutter wobbled on its hinges.

An old building to begin with, the Three Foxes demanded the continued attention Mr. Quinn could not give it personally and his finances would not permit him to delegate to any one else with the price of labor as it was at present. However, he had come to that point in his difficulties where he must needs make some sort of a stab at freshening things. The freshly painted piazza posts proclaimed this. So did flower beds of rather irregular design cut in the lawn. Apparently the present proprietor of the place was doing what he could. But that he was finding the task beyond him was made more or less clear by a sign nailed to one of those newly-painted piazza posts, which read or begged or pleaded or prayed, or all these things together:

MAN WANTED

Mitch read that sign, and looked at the Three Foxes, and turned up his nose, and felt thoughtfully through his pockets, and turned his nose down again, and grinned. Who was he to think of defying the gods? To-morrow morning he must think of finding sustenance, and, according to that sign on

the piazza post, the Three Foxes was anxious to solve that problem for him.

He marched up to the piazza. The inn showed no light. A tomblike stillness lay upon it. The hour was unpropitious for routing out a prospective employer and dickering about a job, so he settled himself comfortably in a flag-seated rocker, to await the morning evidences of activity within this house of hospitality.

He took off his hat and elevated his feet to the piazza railing. One of those soft night breezes of early summer rustled the leaves of the unkempt vines above his head. It was a soothing rhythm. Mitch yawned drowsily. And there, under the sign, as if it had drawn him thither to answer its plea, he fell asleep.

He was awakened by a man standing over him, or he realized sleepily the man had been standing over him. Just now, as Mitch opened his eyes, the man stood beside him. He was quite sure, however, that he had been gently shaken into wakefulness. The man who had performed that unobtrusive service was large, thick-set, with a telltale nose and telltale red blotches on either side of it; a good-humored face.

"Good morning, sir!" said the large party, half hopefully, half suspiciously.

"Good morning!" Mitch replied.

The other man looked him over. His hope seemed to get the better of his suspicion.

"Is there anything I can do for you, sir?" he inquired.

"Do you run this place?"

"Heaven help me, I'm trying to."

"Well, I notice you have a sign on this post, Mr.—ah—"

"Quinn's my name."

"You have a sign on the post saying a man is wanted, Mr. Quinn. I'm him."

The suspicion was resurrected. Mr. Quinn looked doubtfully at the man in the flag-bottomed rocker. This was not the sort of applicant he had pic-

tured. He was altogether too trim, too well set up, too prosperous looking.

"It'll be rough work, some of it."

"What of that?"

"You look like a man that has seen better days."

"I never saw a better one than this, Mr. Quinn. Did you?" Mitch bobbed his head toward the elm-arched street of Chester Village with the lights and shadows of early morning doing their best for it.

"I mean you don't look like the sort that's had any hack at hard work with your hands."

"Well, I'm young and strong and willing and busted."

Mr. Quinn nodded his heavy head as if now he began to get a better grasp on the situation.

"And hungry," Mitch added, suddenly realizing that such was indeed the case.

This statement seemed to awaken a very human response in Mr. Quinn.

"So am I," said he. "Always hungry in the morning. It's foolish to try to do business on an empty stomach. Come with me!"

He ushered Mitch into the house, through the office and a long hall to the rear of the place. The kitchen was clean but cluttered. It did not seem to be the one-man kitchen Mr. Quinn was evidently trying hard to convince himself it could be. A coffeepot bubbled away on an overgrown range. Mr. Quinn gave sundry prods to the fire in the grate and then proceeded to concoct an omelet and set a pan of bacon sputtering beside the coffeepot. He did it all very deftly, as one with much experience. He put the breakfast on a big, bare table in the center of the room and nodded to Mitch to pull up a chair. He himself made a chair creak with his bulk at the opposite side of the table.

Mr. Quinn's omelet was excellent. The bacon was crisp and brown, the coffee all that coffee should be.

"Now then, my friend, do you really mean business about wanting a job here?" said Mr. Quinn after they had both paid an excellent compliment to the meal by leaving the table as bare as when they had come in.

"I never was in more deadly earnest in my life," said Mitch.

"I can't pay no exorbitant wages."

"Well, how much can you pay?"

"What can you do?"

"What's expected?"

"You'll have to paint a little and trim vines a little and mow lawns a little and carpenter a little and weed out the flower beds when the flowers in 'em begin to come up. Can you cook?"

"Better steer me away from that job."

"Have you ever had experience as a waiter?"

Mitch shook his head.

"You look like a man who might have had experience *with* waiters."

"I have," Mitch admitted with a grin.

"Enough, maybe, to get by at a job of that kind yourself?"

"No doubt."

"You'll be a waiter when there's guests in the grillroom, which, if they don't come thicker than they have lately, won't be no terrible strain on you. And you'll have to beat carpets now and then and scrub floors every little while and wash dishes and be generally handy about the place."

"You haven't named the wages yet," Mitch reminded him.

Mr. Quinn seemed somewhat ashamed to designate those wages definitely. His tone in doing so was one of apology.

"Thirty-five a month and keep," he offered.

He had not the slightest expectation that his offer would be taken up.

"It's a bargain. I'm yours to carpenter a little and floor-scrub a little and dish-wash a little and—"

"It'll take too much time to go over 'em all," said Mr. Quinn with a wheezy chuckle. "I'm no slave driver and no

man for rushing my help Sundays, if I can help it. But the run-down condition of this place just now—"

"What's the first thing on the docket?" Mitch asked. "I'm not sticking absolutely to union schedules myself."

"If this willingness in you holds out like it's begun, God has sure been good to me by sending you along," said Mr. Quinn. He seemed much pleased. Also he seemed a trifle perplexed. His eyes had been on Mitch every minute. Curiosity was plainly not wholly foreign to Mr. Quinn's nature.

"It's queer to find a man of your kind after this sort of a job," he observed. "Surely the booze ain't responsible, because you don't look like it ever got you, and besides you couldn't get it now, anyway. So surely it warn't that."

Mitch laughed.

"No, it wasn't that. What's the most necessary thing to tackle first?"

But Mr. Quinn seemed prone to let the Three Foxes go downhill for a few moments longer while he followed out his line of speculation.

"Is there a lady in it somewhere now?" asked Mr. Quinn.

Something about him as he said it, some quaint and almost bashful reluctance that was at odds with his big bulk, made Mitch Holcomb rather like this Mr. Quinn.

"That's the answer," he heard himself saying.

"Ah!" breathed Mr. Quinn, pleased with his own insight. "Ladies, God bless 'em! But don't they raise the devil with us sometimes?"

Just how it happened Mitch could not have told afterward, but presently he was narrating to Mr. Quinn the story of his attempt to make a sudden splurge in the world, the cause of his desire to do so, his failure to accomplish it, and the futility of it all even if he had succeeded. Mr. Quinn had lighted a very ancient brier pipe crammed full of to-

bacco which was dark and not particularly aromatic as to the smoke that fogged from its burning. He was following closely every word of that narrative. Curiously enough Mitch discovered he was finding this confession good for his soul. It was as if Mr. Quinn, sitting there across the table, nodding in understanding while the ancient brier sent out its reek, could and would give him absolution from the sin of unutterable folly and criminal shortsightedness.

"Tough!" Mr. Quinn commented when Mitch finished. "But you were wise to pull up stakes and get away from it all and start fresh."

"The harder I work the better for me just now," said Mitch. "So set me at it."

"The front of the house looks like a dump," sighed Mr. Quinn. "Suppose you start in cutting back some of the vines. We'll look like a rubbish pile if those vines ain't stopped."

So Mitch took off his coat and rolled up his sleeves. Mr. Quinn brought forth a pair of his own overalls in which many reefs had to be taken to get them down to anything like the proper size. Thus knighted with the insignia of toil and armed with lopping shears, Mitch fared forth and attacked the straggling vines at the front of the Three Foxes all through a particularly peaceful Sunday morning. He had a most satisfactory dinner with the host of the house in the kitchen at noon, and finished the vines at the front and chased them around the west side, and fell upon them at the rear. Then, just as the light was fading and Mr. Quinn was regaling himself with a most satisfied inspection of the improved appearance of the place, a car pulled up at the Three Foxes and Mr. Quinn came wheezing out to Mitch to announce that guests were in the grillroom, and that, therefore, Mitch must shift his art at once.

Guests in the grillroom seemed to be a sufficiently infrequent occurrence to rouse Mr. Quinn out of his usual phlegmatic calm. He hustled about the kitchen, collecting pots and pans and broilers, and arranging them for immediate use. He opened the drafts of the big range and prodded away at the fire. Mitch's apparel seemed to trouble him.

"You've got to look like the real thing in the waiter line," he announced. He waddled up the stairs to realms above the kitchen and presently was back with some rusty black garments of ancient cut and by no means guiltless of sundry moth holes.

"I was a waiter myself once, long ago," said he. "These are my old togs. Now let's see!"

Even in that long ago Mr. Quinn must have been of somewhat more than ample girth, if the rusty black clothes he now held up and shook out were to be taken as evidence. He scratched his head as he looked at Mitch's substantial but far less ponderous framework.

"Now maybe with pins we can do it," Mr. Quinn proceeded to take hope.

The waiter he finally contrived out of his own clothes of bygone days and the grinning young man who suffered Mr. Quinn's miscues with the pins in heroic silence spoke volumes as to what the Three Foxes and its latest proprietor were up against financially. However, in due time, Mitch, with a napkin dangling from his arm and a presence which filled Mr. Quinn's heart with satisfaction, made for the swinging doors between the kitchen and the grillroom.

"You look fine," he chuckled. White apron shrouding him, white cap perched jauntily on his head, Mr. Quinn paused in his task of inspecting the contents of a refrigerator in one corner to survey proudly his handiwork. "Now if them pins only hold! Don't put any more strain on 'em than you can help," he added.

Mitch pushed open the door. He

stalked into the room with a beautifully impersonal air and a dignity which overcame even the handicap of Mr. Quinn's clothes, tucked and pleated and ruffled around him.

At a table by the front windows was the little party of guests Mr. Quinn had importantly ushered thither before he metamorphosed himself from smiling host to asthmatic chef. The glow of twilight came in through the windows. Little candle-shaded lights vied with it on the table.

The evening breeze blew back the draperies. The twilight glow came in more strongly. Mitch Holcomb halted quite suddenly in his march across the room, then he resumed it with a dragging step as if his feet had become ton weights. He would have beaten a panicky retreat, if such a course had not been too late.

There at that table sat Bruce Duncan and Mrs. Duncan and Anne Warren and another girl and two young chaps whom Mitch did not know. They had seen him, so there was no use going back. He knew they had seen him because of the very audible gasp from Anne, the startled speaking of his own name by Mrs. Duncan, the way Bruce put his hands on the table as if he wanted to get up but couldn't from sheer paralysis of surprise. There being nothing else to do now, Mitch went straight to that table in that reluctant, hang-back gait of his. He was far too calm as he spread out the menu cards.

"Mitch, for the love of Mike, what's the joke?" Bruce sputtered, something seeming to tell him even as he spoke that it wasn't going to be a joke at all.

"I have it! It's some sort of wager, isn't it?" said Mrs. Duncan, clapping her hands in recognition of her own clever perspicacity. "Do tell us about it, Mitch."

He turned to her with a grave nod of assent.

"Yes. It's a wager. With myself.

I lost. Now, if I can have your order—"

Something in the way he uttered those few words brought a queer tense hush to the laughter which had rippled out when Mrs. Duncan had made her bright little surmise.

"Lord, you look as if this fool stunt was deadly earnest!" said Bruce.

"It is," said Mitch. He looked steadily at Bruce as he spoke, but Anne Warren knew the words were for her ears alone; that none of the others mattered in the least. "The Holcomb Publicity Bureau was a frost. It wasn't a go. It never was a go from the very first. I bluffed it out to the limit, but the bluff had to be called some time, you see. Last night I spent my last dollar on a taxi to take me as far away from—from—oh, everything—as I could possibly get! The coin ran out here in Chester Village and the taxi cast its engine at the same time."

"And working—at this—here—" Duncan said in the same choking sputter.

"One is hungry at breakfast time. I happened to be in this vicinity at breakfast time."

"There isn't any joke at all?"

"Do I look it? Do I act it?" Mitch asked rather sharply. His bearing became highly professional. "May I have your order? The purée of celery is excellent to-day, sir."

Bruce Duncan looked genuinely upset.

"Mitch, if things were that bad, why didn't you let us know long ago? What the devil are friends for, anyway?"

"Let's reverse our positions for a minute," Mitch suggested. "Would you have let me know, would you have come to me, under the circumstances?"

Bruce looked fearfully uncomfortable.

"No, Mitch. No, honestly I hardly think I would." He shot an anxious, pitying glance at Anne. "Maybe we'd better trot along and have dinner at

some other place farther down the road."

"I wouldn't do that," said Mitch quietly. "It seems a pity to scare away the first patrons I attempt to serve."

"I think"—it was Anne's voice speaking now, very thin, very cold, more or less shaky—"I think we'd better run down the road a little farther for dinner, as you suggest."

So they all got up from the table. They seemed rather embarrassed and awkward about it. Mitch went ahead of them to the door, opened it for them, and bowed in approved style.

Mr. Quinn heard the sounds of the exodus. He came in looking troubled.

"What happened?" he demanded.

"I met some old friends," said Mitch. He looked much more as if he had just seen a ghost.

Mr. Quinn peeked out a window. All the rest of the party had climbed into the car waiting by the piazza steps except Anne. Mr. Quinn pulled back the draperies so Mitch, too, could look out.

"Is that the lady you mentioned this morning?" he asked in a husky voice of great interest and great secrecy.

Mitch nodded miserably.

Mr. Quinn took another look. He started. He dropped the draperies back into place.

"I'll beat it," he said, making tracks for the door that led to the kitchen. "The lady," he announced over his shoulder as if he was very happy to make such an announcement, "is coming back."

Anne came in. She closed the door after her. Mitch had dropped the napkin from his arm. It was winding itself unnoticed about his feet. Two of the pins had come out of the coat, letting out a goodly tuck. It flapped from his shoulders in the draft. All in all, Mitch Holcomb at that moment was a most ridiculous figure. But not to Anne.

"Mitch, why didn't you tell me everything last night?" she said.

The reason he had not told her being, to his mind, too painfully obvious, he said nothing.

"It would have made so much difference, if I had known," she went on.

He seemed turning over in his mind what that difference would have been.

"How?"

"I'd have said something entirely different when you asked me to marry you, if I'd only known what I know now," said she.

He found he needed the support of a near-by table edge.

"Mitch, I did care for you so much—so very much. But there was something between us, some impassable wall that kept us apart. It was something I felt rather than saw or reasoned out. I think I know now what it was. Mitch, did you think you had to have money—heaps of it, like Bruce?"

"Yes," he said without looking at her.

"Did you think you could buy love, or at least some sorry semblance of love?"

"Yes," he admitted.

"Mitch, dear, you can't buy even the smallest crumb of love. The thing that built the wall between us was what you thought you must do for me; what you thought I demanded of you. The reaction of that thought upon you was what made me so uncertain of both you and of myself at times. Instinctively you knew, despite all your arguments to yourself, that love isn't purchasable. Yet you forced yourself to believe it was. And it made you something different from what you really are, and crushed you and beat you."

She paused, caught her breath, came closer to him, and put her hands on the shoulders of Mr. Quinn's meal-bag coat.

"Mitch, ask me again to marry you. Ask me now!"

"Ask you again? I haven't a penny in the world, Anne."

"You have this work, here."

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"It's hardly sufficient for two of us."

"Then ask the man who owns this place to give me some kind of work, too; washing dishes, or keeping the place in order; anything so long as it's enough to keep me here with you. Let me prove I mean what I say. Let me fight up with you as you fight your way up. You will do things now, Mitch. You'll be starting on the right footing. Let me prove to you that love doesn't demand; it gives. Ask the man who keeps this inn for something like that for me, or bring him here and let me ask him myself."

The swinging door into the kitchen creaked on its hinges. Mr. Quinn, forgetful for the moment of the heinousness of eavesdropping or of disclosing the fact that he had been indulging in that gentle pastime, came in again. When Mr. Quinn's face lit up it did so literally. The bulbous nose glowed and the red patches which flanked it were young bonfires. Mr. Quinn's face was thus illuminated as he came toward them, doffing grandly his cook's cap.

"There'll be no need of either of you asking for anything like that, marm. A place of the kind is open for you. Thirty a month and found."

"Thank you," said she flushing beautifully. "So it's all settled, Mitch. I'll—I'll just run along with the other people in the car now, and tell them—and then come back."

She was gone before Mitch could say anything. The car sped away. Mr. Quinn stepped to a window to watch it go. He put on the cap again. Mitch at last was aware the stout party at the window was speaking.

"And ices froze in all sorts of funny shapes, and little salads cut out in hearts." Mitch picked up the gist of those remarks.

"What are you talking about?" he asked, seeming to come out of some sort of not unpleasant trance.

"The wedding breakfast," said Mr. Quinn. "I'm strong on that stuff. I was four years with a caterer at one time."

"The wedding breakfast for whom?"

"Well, it ain't for the Czar of Beloochistan. I was thinking of a wedding breakfast for you and the little lady."

"What sort of an unmitigated fool do you think I am?"

"I don't think you're any sort of a fool at all. I think you're a young man that's too wise to be a fool. That's why I'm planning the feed. And a whale of a cake, iced by the best lad to do a job of that kind. I know him. A bell on top of it that natural it looks like it's going to tinkle right off. We'll make it a real time. Are you listening? I see you're not. And that proves I'm right about your having no intentions of being a fool."

SAYS David Belasco, anent his search for beautiful actresses: "If an actress has ideals, whimsical fancies, loyalty, and enthusiasm, they reflect in her face and I know I have found beauty. Beauty is spiritual and fashions the human form and features through a lifetime." He considers that every person is a sculptor, molding his beauty or deforming his soul in his features. And he has picked good sculptors.

THE cycle of fashion inevitably turns, and once more wigs are in vogue. The purpose of this twentieth-century revival of periwigs is to enable the woman with bobbed hair to look more like a gentlewoman in the evening, when she does her ready-made coiffure. Wigs of white silk floss are being flaunted by Parisian beauties, and doubtless these will be followed by perukes of every possible hue and shade.

The Black Villa

By Louise Page



PAULA and the doctor faced each other at the narrow refectory table. The meager luncheon of milk, cheese, honey, and whole-wheat bread seemed to David the kind of meal one should be eating in such a place. The bare, plastered walls, floor of black-and-white tiles, the black-and-white Tuscan tableware, even Paula herself in her white linen gown, belted in black, all seemed a fitting accompaniment to the amazing ensemble of the black villa, its peculiar character and bizarre adornment.

Excepting for the humming of bees in the tall white cosmos outside the windows, no sound broke the midday silence. He had intended asking her certain questions about herself as soon as they were alone. He had felt compassionate to her when he had realized her loneliness, bitter, too, toward the fate which seemed to make of her a weapon of hate in the hands of such a woman as Lucia Sutcliffe.

He had found himself disappointed, oddly enough, at his first meeting with her, expecting to find her as spiritual and detached a type as Doré's moon maidens or the vague forms that haunt Corot's meadow mists. Instead, he found her shapely, healthy, tanned from working in the garden, and, above all, calm nerved and abundantly optimistic. Her bobbed chestnut hair upcurled richly about her oval face, her lips had a trick of upturning at the corners, also,

as if in a perpetual, half-secrective smile of contentment. He found himself forgetting to listen to what she was saying, as he watched the ever-changing vivacity of her expression and the beauty of her dark eyes.

"Take more of the honey. We have the Italian bees here." She gave the low dish a slight push toward him down the center of the table, and leaned her chin on her palm, watching him. "Why do you come here so often, Doctor McClenon? Just to amuse Aunt Lucia? She's not really ill, is she?"

"Not really, perhaps," he smiled back at her. "She has organic heart trouble, but may live for years, of course. I keep her happy by assuring her there's nothing the matter with her, which is the province of doctors nowadays, you know. You help your patients far more that way than by telling them anything ails them."

"She's frightfully eccentric, isn't she?" Paula reached for an apricot and ate it with a leisurely enjoyment that reminded him of a child. "I knew, of course, that she was—well, rather out of tune with life, by the letters she wrote to me, and from things my father had said, but then, her marriage was so unhappy. Then last week I arrived and discovered this awful place that she likes to live in. It's a symbol of hate, isn't it, yet I find her rather a likable old thing, whimsical, cynical, capricious as her parrot. She encourages me to disagree

with her because it provides entertainment for us both. That is very good chartreuse, by the way. Won't you try another glass? It was some of my father's stock, and I brought it in myself. Sealed in an Egyptian urn as an archaeological trophy."

"Do you think you can stand it to live here?" David shook his head at the slim, green bottle, and watched her eyes. "I feel I should warn you against binding yourself to stay here for life."

"Her life, not mine," corrected Paula. "She's nearly seventy. And I like it, even the isolation. She's very well posted, the library is wonderful, and I have fifty acres of shore and woods to ramble over. And I don't really mind the villa so very much; I mean I don't let it oppress me. Father took me to Zanzibar one year. They use black-and-white marble for everything there, and it's very effective against the vivid blue of the sea and the orange sky. I'm partial to sunsets."

"Marble, yes, but not this sort of a place; timber painted black. It's gruesome. "He lighted a cigarette, feeling baffled by her nonchalance. "It cuts her off from all association with her neighbors, and makes people think she is unbalanced mentally."

"Probably she is, or she'd never have taken me here as a finishing touch." Paula's eyes were full of sparkling amusement, as she observed his annoyance. "Let's smoke out on the terrace. She always takes a nap after lunch. Tell me about the rest of our family. My father, Tom Reeves, was the black sheep of the fold. He was always in trouble and in debt. Finally, I suppose you know how he shot Kinney Brailsford when we were in France three years ago?"

"Something about it. It was an accident, wasn't it?"

"No, he meant to, but Kinney recovered." Her tone was cool and un-

concerned. They went out on the stone terrace that surrounded three sides of the villa. As she walked ahead of him David could not help noticing the copper sheen to her hair in the sunlight, the grace of every movement she made. She paused when they came to that side of the house facing the highway. "You know, doctor, I think I rather go, in Aunt Lucia's mind, with the black villa, as a sort of challenge to public sensibilities. I think this is delightfully comical, if you have the proper angle on neighborly malice."

"I wish the place would burn down," David answered seriously. "A citadel of personal hate and rancor, yes. She cherishes hate and retaliation, lives on them in her own mind, spites death, I sometimes believe, to anger her relatives. If she had sold this estate after George Sutcliffe's death, and forgotten old feuds, she would have been happier and stronger. As it is, she stayed and fought her battles with relish."

Paula nodded in assent.

"I love the candor of her position," she said. "You know she says that she will give me everything she has, if I will do two things. One is this: I am to live on in this house and leave it exactly as it is."

"And the other?" asked David. "I wondered what inducement brought you half a world over here to be her fellow prisoner."

"I can't tell you the other." For the first time her gaze wavered and fell before his eyes. "Are the roads around here good for riding?"

"Fine. I'll send a good mount over for you to-morrow—Gringo. He's not too heavy, and very decent in behavior; Morgan breed from Kentucky."

"You're awfully kind to me, Doctor McClellon," she turned her back on the black wall, leaning with crossed arms behind her against the stone pillars of the sleeping porch. "Will Aunt Lucia care, I wonder?"

"Don't humor her," David said decisively. "You'll have to get some recreation. Just have Farney put the horse in the stables and insist upon riding. I'll speak to her about it myself."

She gave him her hand when they reached the broad, low steps.

"Thanks. I wanted a fighting chance to win your good opinion before anything happened, because you're probably the only real person I'll ever meet out here, and it's going to be lonely."

"Nonsense, I'll have my mother call on you, and you'll love her. It's not right for you to be isolated here, just because your aunt doesn't like her neighbors. Good-by, and let me stay for lunch again soon, please."

She stayed out on the terrace long after the black runabout had disappeared down the curving shore road. The voice of Zélie, her aunt's Martinique maid, startled her, low spoken as the girl was.

"Miss Reeves, the madame says she like you come to her right away."

"She didn't sleep long, did she, Zélie?" Paula turned to go indoors regretfully.

"Sleep? She ain't been asleep. I been amusing her 'most an hour, dressing her up fancy and letting her observe herself in the mirror. She got one of her vanity days."

Paula went upstairs to the large upper room overlooking the vista of the distant Sound between the hills. Sitting in a high, winged chair by the open window, her untouched lunch tray beside her, Lucia Sutcliffe surveyed her with quick scrutiny. She was in her late sixties, but prematurely old, despite artificial aids. Her skin had emerged from Zélie's deft treatment, pinkly enameled and clear as ivory, her fluffy, pale-blond hair was curled and arranged with artistry. She had been a short, plump woman. Now the flesh seemed to sag and weigh down on her worn-out body. She delighted in brilliant colors, house robes and negligees that

accentuated the outward somberness of the villa. To-day, she had chosen to wear a rose velvet, bordered in silver fox. Pink topaz earrings set in silver filigree hung from the thin lobes of her ears. Her hands rested on the chair arms, the white, bony fingers, laden with heavy, old-fashioned rings, tapping incessantly as she talked.

"I couldn't sleep," she retorted sharply in answer to Paula's query. "Why didn't you come up here as soon as he had gone? I was waiting to hear what he said to you. Did he make love to you?"

"Not yet." Paula spoke tranquilly, even while the suggestion brought a curious, answering thrill to her own heart. "Did you expect him to the first time he met me?"

"Humph! What do you think of him? Handsome, interesting, debonair, magnetic, eh?"

"Men irritate me. I'd rather not think of them. He seems fairly decent, as they go."

Lucia Sutcliffe chuckled, clenching her fingers delightedly.

"Talk like that to David, and you'll never get rid of him. He's disgusted with the admiration of women. As society's pet physician, he's liable to be called to Récamier's bedside at any hour, to admire milady en dishabille. But he knows their tricks, level-headed, quiet nerved, humorous—ah, he's a lad for your money. Got a fool for a mother. Zélie says he offered to lend you a riding horse."

"Did you hide her somewhere to spy on us?" Paula asked carelessly, keeping her temper. "Yes, he did offer me one for to-morrow. I love to ride. Have you any objection?"

"Not one. Ride with him, attract him, worry him, fascinate him, wake him up. That's why I sent for you to come here. All the better if you're not in love with him. Ride along the shore road toward the west until you come

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to red gables above the trees. My sister-in-law lives there, Germaine Sutcliffe, another fool. I want her to see you with David. She has wished me dead for years, gossiped about me, gone to law over George's will, tried to have me adjudged insane, incompetent, everything a malicious woman could conjure up to torment another over. Finally, when I made a will leaving everything to David she tried deliberately to entangle the boy into an affair with her. Ten years older than he is, and she'd marry him to-day if she could. That's why I sent for you. I hate her and I hate his mother."

Paula's long lashes quivered with contempt as she looked down at the shrunken, gaudily gowned figure.

"You know, Aunt Lucia, if I were you, coddling such thoughts, I should be afraid of ingrowing hate consuming me."

"Rot," returned Mrs. Sutcliffe curtly. "Are you parading a squeamish conscience with me, Paula? Don't strut with self-conscious altruism or morality around here. The bargain is made. You get all I own, so long as you give me the satisfaction of annoying and circumventing and shocking people who have bedeviled me: Germaine Sutcliffe, Alicia McClenon, Belle Yerrington, Frances Heron-Scott, and more, too, but these are women who hate me, and who know about your father and you. You would honor them with your hate, I tell you. Wave every red flag of aggravation you can think of under their upturned noses, and I shall be satisfied. Get talked about. Be daringly indiscreet. Make Germaine suffer for the loss of David. Make Alicia McClenon agonize over the possibility of her son getting tangled into such a scandal as you had with Brailsford. Ride by their places dressed in scarlet and gold, if you like, and let them know you can whip their David to heel any time it pleases you."

The color had risen in Paula's face. Hotly as she resented the old lady's words, she held herself in hand, determined to ignore the vented rancor behind them. Was she right, she wondered, about David? It would have been foolish to deny to herself how strongly she had felt attracted to him. His stalwart, powerful figure, keen, musing gray eyes that seemed to penetrate her mind with comprehending justice and tenderness, his close-lipped, assenting smile that brought assurance, the thick, brown hair, upcurling crisply from his forehead; she remembered every detail about him vividly. There seemed to be some magic gift of healing in his tone and manner. She felt an odd sense of being silently championed by him, although she was in doubt whether or not he knew the Brailsford story.

The suggestion from her aunt that he might be in love with Germaine Sutcliffe was new to her, yet it brought no special regret. She had grown to feel herself outlawed, like her father, barred from even the hopes of other girls. She assured herself that he had not conveyed the slightest sign of unusual interest in her, yet the following morning as she rode along the wooded roads of Pembroke the thud of hoofs behind her brought a little smile to her lips, and she turned to greet him without surprise.

"I knew these roads were strange to you," he said. "How's Gringo behaving himself? I won't ask about Mrs. Sutcliffe. I know that she's behaving herself, or you wouldn't be here."

Paula looked away from him at the opening vista of the Sound through a break in the trees ahead of them.

"That is exactly the way it looks as you come down from Avezzano to the sea," she said musingly. "Could we take that road to the shore?"

"Surely. It's low tide, good riding on the sand."

She let Gringo take his own gait down hill, following the lead of David's mount. For more than a mile they galloped neck and neck along the smooth, curving beach, the gulls rising in swirling flights from their early-morning councils, annoyed at the disturbance. When they halted David smiled at her flushed, joyous face and wind-blown hair.

"You ride mighty well."

"My father taught me when I was little. Glorious down here, isn't it?" She looked about her with a deep sense of relaxation and happiness. Above a peak of woodland down the shore she saw the sunlight throw into sharp relief against the dark pines four lifted, red gables of a hidden house.

"Who lives there?" she asked, to see what answer he would make.

"Your aunt by marriage, Mrs. Gerald Sutcliffe. She is only about thirty, a widow, and Lucia Sutcliffe's special abhorrence. Hasn't she warned you against her yet?"

"I think she did mention her name. Is she interesting?"

David was looking away from her, his eyes half closed, at the red gables. It seemed to Paula as if she saw a thousand memories in his musing eyes.

"Very," he said quietly. "You must ride every morning. I shall order a constitutional for you, and Mrs. Sutcliffe will let you go."

"I'm sure she will, if you ask her. That villa is like a tomb, after you have been shut in for days."

"To make sure that you obey orders, I shall ride with you." Their horses walked along side by side, old friends of the stable and pasture. Suddenly he laid one hand over hers, as it rested on the pommel. "I wish you would feel that I am your friend out here, Paula. You're going to need one, living in that morbid and unhealthy atmosphere. I resent keenly your aunt dragging you over here to be inflicted with her whims

and uncertain disposition. She's not mentally normal, of course, or she would never smother herself in this complex of hate toward people. Promise me you will always call upon me if you need help."

"Promise," she answered gravely.

Mrs. Sutcliffe was having her breakfast tray served on the sleeping porch, Zélie told her, watching for her return with the doctor. Paula joined her with an inward dread of having the bloom brushed off her memory of the ride.

"Well?" The old lady's eyes took in every detail of her gray linen riding costume. "Enjoy yourself? Did he make love to you yet?"

Paula laughed in spite of her resentment at being quizzed, and dropped into the willow chair beside the couch.

"Not yet. I'm starved from the ride. May I have breakfast up here with you? A glass of orange juice, please, Zélie, toast, nice grilled bacon, and coffee." She shook her hair loosely from side to side, her chin lifted to the salt air with the incoming tide, a new expression in her eyes that did not escape Mrs. Sutcliffe.

"See anything of Germaine Sutcliffe?"

"I saw the red gables of her house."

"What did David say to you?"

"Am I expected to report in detail our conversation? Because I won't. I couldn't remember what he said, in the first place, and I don't think it's worth repeating, anyway."

"Well, don't. Makes no difference to me which way you go around Robin Hood's barn," chuckled her aunt. "Either fool him and get him away from Germaine, or go at him in earnest and marry him. I'd like to see Alicia McClenon's face when she found out he had married you. Where is Brailsford now?"

"I don't know," Paula replied quietly.

"I do. The paper had an item in yesterday about him. He's at Newport;

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still limps, I suppose. Just like your father to shoot a man in the leg when he aimed at his heart. Drunk, I presume."

Paula set her cup of coffee down with hands that trembled. After all, she tried to tell herself, what right had she to resent anything her aunt cared to say to her? There had been no question of sentiment in her coming to stay at the black villa. She was to render certain services in return for a home and surety for the future. She must face the terse whimsicality and sarcasm of Lucia Sutcliffe, or break the bargain. She must force herself to look with pity and forgiveness on the crumpled, acrid old woman in the costly negligee. Prisoners of bodily pain usually took out their own rebellion at fate on those nearest to them. But she knew in her heart that she could never play the part planned for her, never be accessory to the revenge her aunt had conceived. She would not see David alone again, she told herself. She would not permit him to go with her on the morning rides. Propinquity, opportunity; one could not oppose either when one's own heart cried out in lonely willingness for comradeship and sympathy.

As for Kinney Brailsford, that chapter in her life was finished, so far as she herself was concerned. The news of his arrival in America left her without interest or reaction. It did not occur to her how the old scandal might be revived and used against her. With her father's death, she had discovered that, even in continental circles, there is the line one does not pass with singed wings. It had not troubled her during the remainder of her stay in Italy. She loved her books and studies, and had been preparing herself for a course in archaeology when the letter from her aunt had summoned her home. It seemed to her as if she had been in a drifting dream of unexpected happiness

during the first days of her stay at the villa, until Mrs. Sutcliffe had ripped away the glamour from the situation, and exposed its crudities.

For weeks, now, she avoided meeting David alone. By postponing her rides until late afternoon, she made it impossible for him to accompany her, as his office hours took him to the city at this time. One morning, however, she encountered him unexpectedly in the lower hall as she entered from the garden, her arms full of cut flowers for the house.

"Cosmos, dahlias, marigolds. This place needs fragrance and grace," he said. "I'll send you late roses from our garden. You're looking mighty well."

"Am I?" she tried to pass by him, but he barred her way into the living room deliberately.

"What is the trouble? Why have you avoided seeing me?"

"I prefer sunsets," she said carelessly. "I ride around five or six." "You may as well tell me," he persisted. "I know Mrs. Sutcliffe's gift for suggestion. What has she told you about me?"

"Nothing at all. I like to ride alone, that is all." She tried again to pass by him, to maintain composure and keep her eyes from betrayal under his keen glance.

"Paula, wait. You promised to let me be your friend. I want to know what she has told you to make you change like this."

"I don't like danger zones." Her humor brought her self-possession back. "Do you know why my aunt brought me from Italy, Doctor McClenon?"

"I don't care, if you'll call me David," he said doggedly. "I'm going to ride with you this afternoon."

"Oh, wait, please." Her hands pushed him back from her, as he tried to draw her into his embrace.

Zélie's low, cool tones came from the landing above them.

"The madame, she say she like to see the doctor before he goes."

When the roses arrived about an hour after he had gone Paula buried her face deep in their loose, fragrant masses of bloom. She carried a bowl of them up to Mrs. Sutcliffe, before leaving for her ride, her eyes dreamy with betrayal of her happiness.

"From David, eh?" The old lady nodded with pleasure. "Waking up, isn't he? Spell's working, eh, Zélie?"

"Miss Paula don't need no magic to make any man crazy over her," the West Indian girl smiled back at her knowingly.

Paula turned and left the room, all her soul aroused into sudden, hot rebellion against the silly, sickening plot she was expected to be a party to. Once out in the fresh air and sunlight, she looked back at the black villa with a shudder of dread. Its atmosphere of somber hatred had begun to oppress her, to get the better of her in spite of herself. Gringo seemed to feel her nervousness. She let him race unchecked along the ravine road that led to the shore where David had met her before. She would tell him the truth to-day, herself, she thought fiercely, before any one else had a chance to. Yet, when he joined her she fell into a mood of nonresistance, drifting into an hour of forbidden happiness with him beside her.

Leaving the horses on the beach, they walked out on the rocks, stopping for the shells and sensitive periwinkles that amused her. When they had reached the table-shaped rock at the end she lingered, watching the hazy sunset, a glorified ruby slipping away in a gunmetal sea mist. The tide turned and started back with a slow, far-reaching murmur.

"Are you warm enough?" asked David quietly. "Take this."

He laid his own coat around her shoulders, and his voice with its ring

of assurance and authority weakened her determination to tell him. After all, she argued, why should she spoil this one final hour with him? She would hold it in her heart as a last memory. When they finally returned to the beach and found the horses she felt a relaxed peace with him. He had not spoken to her of love, had not passed the border of friendship in his manner, yet there was an undefinable tenderness, an assumption of protection over her that left her satisfied.

On the way back Gringo showed his uneasiness. Several times he swerved, shied at nothing, and danced restlessly ahead of David's bay.

"It isn't anything at all," she laughed when David urged her to change with him. "He stepped on a coiled black snake in the road yesterday and has acted like this ever since. I'm not a bit afraid."

Almost as she spoke a car cut out from a private road directly in front of them, startling the horse into bolting. David followed at a dead gallop, striving to reach her. The car had halted, its three occupants watching the runaway. They saw David gain on Gringo, lean far over and seize the swaying figure of the girl from the saddle. It all happened, in less than one minute. When the car drew up alongside of him, David had dismounted and was kneeling, half supporting Paula in his arms. He glanced up quickly, recognizing the two women in the tonneau with relief.

"Good you came along, Germaine. I'll take her home in the car. It is Paula Reeves, Mrs. Sutcliffe's niece." He stood up, holding the unconscious form in his arms. "Open the door there, Carlson, will you?"

"Just a moment, Carlson. Suppose you go back to the lodge and telephone up for another car to be sent down to Doctor McClellon. We will wait for you." Germaine Sutcliffe's tone was

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level and curt. She stared down with wide, blue eyes at the blanched face on David's shoulder. "Sorry, David. I don't like complications."

"It's hardly a moment for personal animus." He said it between set teeth. "You saw the accident. Common courtesy and humanity demanded that you give what assistance you could. She's suffering from shock."

"Yes, I see she is. Why don't you take her home, Belle?" She turned with a little smile to her companion. "Anything to help dear old Lucia."

Belle Yerrington leaned forward with frank curiosity to look at the girl who had dared to live in the black villa with a woman like Lucia Sutcliffe, whose name was linked with Kinney Brailsford and the shooting affair at Chevremont.

"She is very unusual, isn't she?" she said. "You look romantic, Dave."

He turned away from them to carry Paula to the other car which had arrived. On the way to the villa, she regained consciousness. She was not at all hurt, she insisted; it was absurd to make so much fuss over a little accident. She was only worried about getting the horses back. She begged him not to tell Mrs. Sutcliffe anything that had happened.

"You'd better take Gringo back now," she added. "I don't think I will ride again while I am here." She closed her eyes as he kissed her unresponsive lips. "Good-by, David. I'm sailing next week. Don't scold and swear and say a lot of ridiculous things. I must go back. That was Germaine Sutcliffe, wasn't it? I saw her as I went by on Gringo, just the flash of her yellow hair. And I want to tell you, before any of them have a chance, about myself, just why I belong here with Aunt Lucia. We're both rather lawless, I think, and we hold the highest honors for family scandal."

"I won't let you say such things about

my future wife." He tried to stop her with another kiss, but she pressed his face away with her hand.

"No; please hear me. My father, Tom Reeves, had gone through several fortunes when my mother died, and we went to France. I think he was in some trouble here. That was why we had to live abroad. Kinney Brailsford made him manager of his racing stables in France. Do you know him?"

"By reputation." David's tone conveyed much.

"He's not so bad. He was very good to father, but when his wife brought suit for divorce, she—named me. Father shot him that same day the papers were served. It was all a frame-up lie," Paula said quietly, her eyes clear and untroubled. "We went on to Sorrento afterwards. Brailsford recovered and refused to prefer any charges. He swore it was an accident, which I think was rather decent of him, considering dad's excellent marksmanship. He is still slightly lame."

David held her close, his face pressed against her hair. The car turned from the shore road up the winding drive to the black villa. She tried to put him away from her.

"You see it really is good-by. I am going back next week."

"If you do, I will follow you. I've already told my mother."

She smiled up at him as they stopped before the high black porte-cochère.

"Don't carry me. I am able to walk and I'd rather. Good-by, David."

He aided her up the low, broad steps. No farther, she begged him. The last glimpse he had of her was from the setting of the black doorway. It framed her beauty like some antique painting, he thought, the gray sea mist and open sea before her in the distance; the villa and all it symbolized as a background.

She waited until after dinner before telling Mrs. Sutcliffe of her final decision, and avoided all mention of the

accident. It would be an ordeal, she thought, but what of that? She felt no bitterness toward her aunt. She merely longed to escape from the compact she had made unwittingly.

When Zélie had prepared her mistress for the night Paula lingered. Usually she read aloud until the old lady felt drowsy, or, going down to the music room, she would sit in the darkness, playing favorite bits from the operas, old songs, fragments of melody from the masters. She lingered longer than was usual, to-night, playing last of all the "Shadow Dance" from "Dinorah." The capricious, delicate air seemed to unweave from her fingers with irresistible charm. When she ceased and went upstairs, she found Mrs. Sutcliffe sitting up in bed among her many lace-trimmed pillows, a peach-tinted silk shawl folded around her shoulders, and a ruffled cap of Flemish lace and peach-satin ribbon bows drawn low over her carefully curled hair. Her finger tips still tapped the linen sheet in time to the melody.

"Don't read to me to-night. I hate that book you started," she said crisply. "Can't bear modern novels: maple sap and skimmed milk, or climacteric colly-wobbles of middle-aged lovers. Idiotic twaddle. Get out Suetonius' 'Lives of the Cæsars' for to-morrow, with a dash of Saint-Simon or Gautier. Hand me my tablets and open the window wide. Is there a moon?"

"The mist hides it." Paula went through the routine of nightly duties assigned to her, setting the telephone on the low stand by the bed, the little night lamp beside it, the bottle of digitalis tablets within reach. The face under the lace-and-satin cap looked oddly yellow and old, she thought, with a new sense of pity. The deep-set, brilliant old eyes squinted at the light like a disturbed owl.

"Go on. I shan't want you any more. I want to be alone."

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"Aunt Lucia," Paula paused at the foot of the painted bed. It seemed as if she noticed more vividly than ever before the Watteau figures in its oval panels, the frivolous, rose-silk canopy overhead and rose-satin coverlid. There was a curious strain of imaginative romance, she thought, lurking somewhere in the unsatisfied recesses of Lucia Sutcliffe's heart. "I am leaving for Italy on Monday."

"Well, you won't do any such thing," retorted the old lady flatly. "If you think you're in love with David, it's nothing to me. Don't let Alicia McClenon stop you. She doesn't bother me one bit. Here, read that. It will make you feel better. You've got them worried.

Paula read the letter from David's mother, that was tossed to her.

MY DEAR LUCIA: I would not write this only for David's sake, because I feel that he is in danger, and I feel you are both being victimized by a clever woman.

Possibly you are not aware of his tentative engagement to Germaine. They have been devoted to each other, and I have looked forward to their marriage with deep happiness. I was told just now by David that Germaine had broken their engagement because of his present affair with this girl whom you are harboring. Germaine has told me of the unfortunate case in which she was the leading figure. I refer to the Brailsford divorce, and the shooting of Kinney by her father, your brother, Tom Reeves. I consider it my duty to tell David of this, and warn you to watch your own safety. Sincerely,

ALICIA MCCLENON.

"Well?" chuckled Mrs. Sutcliffe. "Stirred them up, didn't we? And you want to quit just when I'm enjoying myself? I won't let you go, not until these women have been worried and harrassed as I have been."

"I know," Paula said wearily. "You want to make people miserable, to stir up trouble, to get even, to make of me a cat's-paw for your hate, and I won't have it. I do love David. Why should I deny it? I love him so well that I

would never stand in his way or hurt him. I know perfectly well that it would be a great detriment to him to even have our names linked together. That is why I am going back."

"You can't go, because I won't give you a cent, do you hear?" Paula watched the bejeweled fingers beat the satin coverlid with lack of any emotion. "You're just like your father. You take things under false pretenses. You're just the same as a common thief, only cleverer. Maybe Alicia's right. You see what she says. She warns me against you. Perhaps, after you've gotten all you want out of me, you'll try to do away with me. But you shan't get a cent of my money; not if I left it to David."

"Oh, Aunt Lucia," pleaded Paula with outstretched hands. "let's be friends. I don't want your money. Try to understand. I am grateful to you, but I cannot stay on here and accept your hospitality when I have no intention of doing what you want me to."

Her hand was struck aside by a feeble, misdirected blow.

"Get out of here." The old lady's voice rose to a shrill treble. "I can't bear the sight of you. Don't speak another word to me. Get out. I hate you."

"You hate everything and everybody," Paula answered serenely. "What is the use of it all; this petty warfare, this stored-up dynamo of hate that only reacts upon yourself, this hideous house? I shall be glad to leave your black tomb forever."

"And you won't find one door open to you, where you're going."

"I don't need open doors," said Paula. "I want sunlight and freedom. Good night. I'm sorry to have troubled you. I shall sail on Monday."

As she closed the door a book was sent hurtling against it with a gasping curse. Lucia Sutcliffe dropped back among her pillows with staring eyes,

breathing heavily. She lay still, her head shaking slightly, her lips pursed together fiercely, as she mentally rehearsed the scene that had just transpired. Suddenly a sharp spasm of pain contracted her face. One hand was flung out from the lace-trimmed bedclothes to grope blindly after the bottle of tablets. She managed to unscrew the top, and take one, dropping back exhausted and panting. The pain came again in a strange, relentless paroxysm. It gripped and held her like an electric shock, releasing her as quickly as it came. With one final effort she flung out her hand to find the telephone, pulled it toward her, forced her lips to give Doctor McClellon's number. As she waited grimly, between her and the wall there seemed to issue radiations of light that blurred and fascinated her vision. David's voice called back and gave her hope.

"You come at once, David. I'm—I'm—" Her lips moved silently, striving to form the words, stopped and stiffened in a tight line as the telephone fell from her hand to the stand, struck the small crystal-and-silver night lamp and overturned it. It rolled off the stand, caught in the lace valance and hung head down, its glass globe broken. The tiny tongue of flame flickered upward, nearly went out, then caught onto the lace, creeping along where the oil had spilled.

Back among the pillows lay Lucia Sutcliffe, her profile a stark silhouette against the rising glow of fire. Her eyes looked ahead of her, as if in surprise at some final revelation; her teeth were set; her high nostrils sunken. The peach-colored silk shawl draped her about with a semblance of pitiful youthfulness. One hand clutched the ribbons of her lace night robe, as if she would have torn it from her tortured heart. The fire seemed to hesitate as it reached the top of the bed and saw what lay there. It turned and followed

the lace flounce back to the footboard, drawn by the draught from the open window, and spread to the painted wood.

Paula was undressed, a loose, velvet dressing robe around her as she packed rapidly. The odor of burning cloth drifted faintly through the closed door. When she opened it to find the cause she found the corridor filling with creeping wraiths of smoke from under her aunt's door. Pausing one instant at the foot of the servants' stairway, she called to Zélie to rouse the other maids, and the two men over the garage to give help. Running back to Mrs. Sutcliffe's rooms, all thought of her bitterness against her was gone; only a great pity and love for one of her own blood. The door was unlocked, as usual. When she opened it the smoke seemed to rise to face her like a genie of vast, released form. She staggered chokingly to the bed, and half fell across it.

"Aunt Lucia," she cried, "wake up. Don't be afraid. Aunt Lucia, do you hear?"

Struggling to keep her senses clear, she strove to lift the figure from the bed, when suddenly her hand came in contact with the bared shoulder and touch of lifeless flesh. Her own blood chilled at the shock. Slowly she forced herself to reach and find the face on the pillows, the stilled pulse in the frail wrist, that hung over the overturned telephone, and she caught her hands back with a cry of horror.

"Oh, God," she said between set teeth. "God help me!" The smoke rose in waves from the burning wood-work and draperies, broke over her as she fell across the rose-pink, satin coverlid, and poured into the halls.

Far out in the night there rose the call of the fire siren down in the village, but ahead of the alarm turned in by Zélie came the low, underslung roadster that David used on his night calls. When he reached the hill road

the flames flared upward in long, writhing spirals against the darkness. On the lawn a terrified, half-clad group of colored servants gathered, staring in helpless fascination at the blazing house. Zélie's long wails cut the stillness weirdly. David sprang from the car, and seized her by the shoulder as she knelt, swaying and praying, demanding to know where Paula and her aunt were.

"Burning alive, burning alive," moaned Zélie.

He released her with a feeling of grim rebellion against the fatalism behind her speech. The red light from the fire brought the blackness of the villa into amazing relief. He made for the open doorway and took the stairs three and four at a time. The location of each room was familiar to him. She would go to her aunt, he felt positive. He took off his coat as he ran, wrapped it around his face to keep from suffocating, and trusted to memory as a guide. Once within the burning room, he groped for the bed, and found two bodies there. Lucia Sutcliffe was past all aid, facing the end of all flesh with a curiously disdainful and incredulous smile, but Paula was alive.

He lifted her in his arms, and opened the door into the adjoining room, used by the old lady as a sitting room. Long doors opened upon the sleeping porch. The wind carried the flames in the westerly direction. There was comparative breathing space here. Heavy, Japanese kudzu vines clambered above the arches of the porch, knotted and twisted until they would sustain a double weight, he felt sure. Bearing the unconscious body of Paula over one arm, he lowered himself down to the ground and carried her to the waiting car.

Other cars had followed his from the adjoining estates. Along the shore road there came the distant clang of the fire engines. The side walls of the villa suddenly swayed and crashed in. He did not even turn to look at the pic-

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ture it made against the night, but worked over her steadily, quietly, with restoratives. At the first sign of returning consciousness, he lifted her head on his shoulder.

"You hear me, don't you, dear?" he said imperatively. "Paula, can you hear me? Paula, breathe deeply, dear, do you hear?"

Out of the crowd around the car, Alicia McClellon stepped to the running board, and leaned over to touch his arm, her face white in the brilliant glow from the fire.

"May I help, David?" she asked. "Let us take her home. Where is Lucia?"

"Died before the fire started," he answered, drawing her hand over until it found Paula's limp one. "Paula tried to save her. I found her lying across her bed. She's all right now. I'll drive, if you can hold her, mother."

As the crowd made way for the McClellon car, there came a final moment in the destruction of the villa. At one instant it stood, a declaration of defiance, and seemed to throw out its final challenge. Another moment, and the black smoke had swept over it. It fell like a monument to the futility of hate, just as the village fire department raced with clanging bells up the drive.



VILLANELLE OF QUEEN DEIRDRE

WE are not drowned so deep but we can sing
In praise of Deirdre, the belovéd queen.
Be faithful with me in remembering.

We are not blinded so by tears that sting
But we can see her hair's immortal sheen.
We are not drowned so deep but we can sing

The feet of Deirdre passing in the spring
Through orchards flushed by the first mist of green.
Be faithful with me in remembering.

Because we served her long ago, we fling
Songs to her down the wind, for all to glean.
We are not drowned so deep but we can sing.

Because we loved her bitterly, we cling
To all who have a little of Deirdre's mien.
Be faithful with me in remembering

Our Celtic hills, where she died, sorrowing,
Regal in beauty that was overkeen.
We are not drowned so deep but we can sing.
Be faithful with me in remembering.

WALTER ADOLPHE ROBERTS.

The Path of the Peacocks

By Nancy Cabell

Author of "Lorna of the Dunes,"
"The Broken Lute," etc.



PASCAL stepped from the flagged court of the small hotel which, with its oily proprietor whose almond-shaped black eyes belied his Gallic gestures, his fluent French, and hinted at more than a trace of Indian blood, formed the frail bulwark of Europe and civilization against the menacing, uncharted hills.

Only a few days before the young American and his sister had arrived in this magical, toy-sized city of Lahlook, stronghold of an absurdly small principality in a certain remote valley of the Himalayas. Three days of racking, old-world travel had transported them, it seemed to Merle Pascal, from this century to another, a buried era that could only exist in graven stone, in romantic imagery—in India.

A slim-hipped brown woman, balancing an earthenware water jar on her head, almost collided with him as he adventurously swung from the highway into a cobbled, beckoning alley, overhung on either side by native dwellings that seemed to have been hewed from the stone of which Lahlook had first been built thousands of

years before. Here were strange shops, blind walls, broken here and there with latticed openings, through which the whispering of women as the white man passed beneath suggested some rustling live thing.

Queer! Pascal knit his fine, dark brows in puzzled wonder as the hiving people that had swarmed in the sunless passage a minute before dissipated before him, merged into the shadows of doorways as snails vanish into their shells. Even the naked children, whose shouts had outclamored the high-pitched chatter of their elders, scuttled out of his way. There was something hostile in this sudden silence, this swift retreat. It portended some mysterious happening, he thought. For throughout India the foreigner is waylaid, besieged by importunate beggars, by priests, and children, and wizened, brown merchants, whose wares are arrayed on a rug before them—all with outstretched palms.

Had this hush, this emptying of the thoroughfare, something to do with the vague trouble at which the swarthy, sloe-eyed Bovary had hinted? The innkeeper had not seemed overanxious

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to accommodate the Americans when they had arrived, he remembered. But Merle Pascal was not the man to be denied anything he set his heart upon having. And the heat had come suddenly upon the plains, driving them to the hill country.

Months before, in New York, Pascal had received a cable announcing the death of the Englishman who was his partner in a teakwood venture in Siam. He had been obliged to sail at once to straighten out the ensuing tangle of their concession, and his sister, with whom he lived in the conventional brownstone home of their inheritance, had begged to come with him. His business affairs reorganized, and the assistant manager of the Bangkok branch put in charge of the jungle expedition, he trekked back slowly from the fastnesses of the Siamese interior, with its perils of snake bite and swamp fever. A touch of the latter kept him lingering some weeks in Bangkok and while he gathered back his well-knit, muscular strength Laura Lacey reveled in adventurous journeyings. Widowed at thirty, imposed upon and hedged in always by the Pascal traditions, she had never before tasted the sweet tang of travel, of discovering the secret places of the world. Now she was insatiate for more.

"It would be too absurd to go back now," she said beguilingly, "after we've come this far. Don't talk to me about 'business'; you know very well that you only dabble in it, for the fillip of interest that you want out of life. Other men's hobbies run to books or prints or horses; you fancy importing weird things from far-off places. That betrays your own suppressed desires, you know. I want to do India, Merle, and not by rote of Cook!" Guiltily he was aware that her frank definition of his amazingly lucrative trade fore-stalled any business reasons he might give to hasten their return to America.

He admitted to himself that, in spite of the slimy heat of the jungle, in spite of his discomfort and languor—he had acquitted himself creditably enough in the mortally hard weeks he had put in in the interior—the call of the East was whispering in his blood, singing in his ears. There was something about these hot, blue skies, this sun-baked earth that yielded beauty and peril and death with the fertility of tropic places, that enmeshed both flesh and fancy. The full-throated summons of the temple bells bade him bend the knee to old gods.

"Of course," Laura had murmured indifferently, "*I can go alone.*"

"And get yourself in Heaven only knows how awkward a predicament. You would go out of the European quarter, across the river, with only your ayah, remember!"

He had reminded her crossly of a Bangkok excursion that had ended in an infamous little coffee house that was a resort of cutthroats. She had gotten away safely, but had left her purse, and the lavallière and engagement ring that she always wore, in the none-too-clean hands of a light-opera brigand, with a knife in his sash. This reminiscence had only served to remind him of ugly legends he had heard. She couldn't traverse India alone, of course. There was no real reason why he shouldn't accompany her, for, in spite of his money, his position in the cliquey New York of the Knickerbocker which had shrunk so appallingly, Merle Pascal led a singularly detached life. It was a matter of indifference to him—and to most of those he called his intimates, he supposed—whether he was in his Murray Hill establishment or out of it.

So he and Laura roamed through deserted cities, peopled by shadows and jackals; came upon temples to forgotten gods, where only lizards sunned themselves by day, and strange, pale flowers bloomed by night; lingered in Bombay and Calcutta. But the glamorous se-

cret world he had dreamed of he did not find, save in temple ruins by moonlight, in underground cities of the dead. The India of living men had absorbed too much of the Occident. In all the big cities there were the devices of the twentieth century. Street cars and English shops annoyed him; he might as well have been in an indifferent American hotel as in many of the places where they stayed, except for the lack of sanitation.

He thought moodily that civilization had laid waste the barbaric splendor of the East, and left only its dirt and dis-ease and squalor.

He had already engaged passage home when a grizzled army officer, with whom he played polo, smiled grimly at his regret.

"My dear fellow, if we veterans had your assurance of India's inert passivity! Outwardly, certainly, she accepts the yoke of civilization. We take her riches, enforce in return certain sanitary improvements, official regulations, military service, and all the rest of it. We've broken the plague, abated the fevers—which serve very well to carry off the excess population, to my mind—but as to any real impression!" He laughed. "The heart of India, under her passive exterior, beats unseen, unheard save by a very few, with lust and vengeance and passion. Go up beyond the foothills; you'll find there an order unchangeable; a life of primitive power, servile slavery. Damn it, the rulers of those tiny principalities, with the power of life and death in their beastly, jeweled hands, are the real masters of India! If they ever banded together, struck—but there's too much interior trouble. Take Kahmур, whose sovereign, by the way, is an Oxonian. There's old India for you; the white man's foot has left no imprint on the stones of Lahlook, which, some odd thousand years ago, was cut out of the rock!"

"I'd like to go up there," Pascal had pondered, "if we hadn't already taken passage."

"Afraid you'd run into trouble if you did," shrugged the major. "It's brewing, I'm told. How about another rubber?"

But it was not destined that they should sail on the next packet. In the native quarter of Bombay two cases of fever were reported. March, drawing to a close, brought an early rainy season upon the plains. The next humid day found the entire native quarter, as well as the port, quarantined. The official with whom they conferred shrugged. Those who could leave the city would do well to hasten their departure, make for the hills. It would not be wise for the fragile Mrs. Lacey to linger the necessary weeks before sailing in the devastating heat of the city.

That same day they had begun the journey whose last part was of the most primitive description as they struck off from the beaten trail.

Now, in the age-old city whose massive, curiously wrought gates, thrown open always—for the temple at which these brown people worshipped stood in a grove just beyond the city wall—were just visible to him, Merle Pascal considered the sudden silence. It was as portentous as the breathless space before an August storm. Then, laughing at his own fancy, he turned to the contemplation of a dark-hued prayer rug in the shop at his left. It was really fine, well worth the necessary hour of barter, in which he had learned to hold his own. But he did not enter the low doorway.

Through the arch at the head of the twisting street came a small procession of men, grouped about some precious golden thing they bore. Pascal saw the gold leaf glint in the sun; blinked his eyes before he saw that it was a litter, gilded, silk hung, blazoned with the royal peacock. Swaying on the bronze shoul-

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ders of the nearly nude bearers, it approached like some ark of old, treasure laden. He caught his breath. Was it possible that the man who sat, Buddha fashion, behind those tissue curtains had traversed Europe, studied at the foremost English university? Strangely anomalous race!

The palanquin approached. The street should be lined with kneeling subjects, he thought. But its blank, hushed emptiness was only emphasized by a handful of idlers who lingered by the gutter after his coming had so mysteriously banished the throng. These dropped to their knees with a strange, guttural cry, and struck their brown foreheads upon the paving stones. He drew back in a sort of distaste for the whole dramatic proceeding as the procession halted within a few yards of where he stood, and the litter bearers lowered their burden. With a shrill cry, a white-robed figure brushed past him from the scented darkness of the shop's interior, flung himself on his knees before the palanquin as two lithe, brown bodies closed in upon him. There was a flash of steel, a scream of supplication.

Automatically Merle Pascal leaped forward. In his college days he had played football, and his training flexed his muscles now. The knife was at the helpless suppliant's throat as he tackled the first would-be murderer, felt the oily body squirm from his grasp. He didn't realize it, but only a shrill command from behind the quivering curtain of the litter stayed the death-dealing thrust of the second man. He was awkwardly disengaging the arms of the man he had saved from about his knees when the silk hangings parted, and the rajah stepped out.

Dazed, decidedly breathless, Pascal conquered the desire to laugh. The potentate of Kahnur inclined his turbaned head, in which a priceless sapphire glittered like an impressive eye.

He raised one pudgy hand, thereby displaying, below a jewel-studded bracelet, an extremely practical wrist watch, whose leather strap and buckle cried out its London origin.

"The caution of your attendants is commendable, but a little premature, your highness," said Pascal dryly. "This unhappy devil meant no harm."

"I think," drawled his highness in excellent English, "that you have the advantage of me."

"My name is Pascal."

"And you are staying at the execrable French hotel with your sister. We have so few visitors, Mr. Pascal, that their advent is notable." A smile curled back the impassive lips of the prince and showed his beautiful teeth. "Very decent of you to have intervened in behalf of Sukra Lal. He has some very good things, by the way, in his black hole of a shop. I dare say my worthy attendants were too hasty."

He nudged the prostrate merchant with a well-booted foot and addressed him in his native tongue while Pascal stood there, lost in wonder at the casualness of the whole grotesque incident. Then:

"Decidedly they were!" The rajah laughed naively. "He merely wished to inform me of the arrival of certain silks ordered by one of my household. But you may have noticed the impressive silence that heralded my coming. My devoted subjects are a trifle discontented for the moment. Frankly, one faction is giving me considerable trouble. Hence the animosity of my attendants to the indiscreet Sukra Lad."

So that explained the strange desertion of the living thoroughfare.

He held out his plump, very much beringed hand.

"I'm really grateful to you. If Sukra Lal ever advertised, he would announce himself 'purveyor to his majesty,' so you have spared me the considerable inconvenience of his loss."

Pascal found himself rather liking the rotund brown prince.

"Possibly his death might have inconvenienced the man himself and his family, as well," he retorted, his gray eyes glinting with amusement. "So I have cause to feel doubly proud of my impulse."

Chuckles, the rajah entered the shop, preceded by the still pallid merchant, who backed, with many bows of homage, into the spicy shadow. The episode was ended.

Pascal sauntered back to the ugly hotel. His sister, who wore a flushed, excited look, was not alone. She had not felt well for a day or two, but he was surprised to see her shiver under the robe she had drawn up to her shoulders, for the sunny, shabby sitting room was anything but cool. The temperature of the hill country drops perceptibly at sunset, but the days are bright and hot. She did not rise from the wicker chair in which she lay, but beckoned him to enter.

"My brother, Colonel Travis. Wasn't it heavenly of the colonel to look us up so soon, Merle?"

It transpired that she had met the elderly Englishman in Calcutta, at one of the Government House balls.

"How did you know we were here?" asked Pascal, genuinely interested.

Colonel Travis pulled at his grizzled, slightly graying mustache.

"Bad news—you know the rest of it, Pascal. I'm here on sick leave, officially. In fact, I'm keeping a weather eye out. What in the name of common sense possessed you to come to Kahlmur at this particular time?"

"Port was quarantined on account of fever," Pascal told him laconically. "I had to get my sister out of the place."

"You couldn't have chosen a worse alternative." The old soldier told him irascibly. "The whole province is seething; Lahlook may close its gates

at any time. You've come to the wrong place for peace and quiet. Not a revolt, but a revolution is under way. When it breaks—"

"Mrs. Lacey must be out of the way," acquiesced Pascal thoughtfully. "So that explains this morning's incident!"

He recounted his adventure briefly.

"Very unwise of his highness to move beyond his palace walls. It was a gesture, I suppose. I take it that the Frenchwoman wasn't with him? No, even he would hardly risk that. She—Mademoiselle Caspary—is the *casus belli*. The rajah has a weakness for lovely Parisiennes; the last time he left his toy kingdom he brought back with him a golden-haired doll to dissipate the royal ennui. She is beautiful, they say—I've never seen her—and she has the rajah under her thumb. When I explain that the maharani, the mother of his only son, is greatly beloved, and that this dancing girl has ousted her from her throne, her rooms in the palace, her actual authority, you will understand why both she and her royal paramour are hated.

"She has even appeared at state festivals, clad in the maharani's robes, her jewels. It takes a good deal, you see, to content a darling of the boulevards! So much, in fact, that for two years his highness has levied outrageous taxes on his people to meet the luxurious lady's demands."

"And now it is time for an accounting."

"Exactly." The colonel pulled himself out of his chair. "So, if you're wise, you'll make arrangements to leave immediately."

Laura, brilliantly flushed, shook her head.

"I wouldn't miss the excitement for anything in the world," she told them.

"I shall leave you to persuade her, if you can," the colonel declared.

When Colonel Travis had left Merle

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Pascal spent himself in argument. His sister lay back in her chair, her gray eyes closed, and heard him out. At last she reached out and touched his hand. Startled, he retained her burning fingers.

"Laura, you're ill!"

She opened her eyes wearily, and he saw how unnaturally bright they were, how heavy lidded.

"It's nothing more serious than a touch of malaria," she reassured him. "But I do feel wretched. I'm awfully afraid, Merle, dear, that we'll have to stay here for a few days."

By the time Ghita, her native maid, had got her to bed with a heated stone at her feet, and cool cloths on her forehead, Pascal knew that they were slated for a fortnight in Lahlook, at best.

Two days later Pascal's only worry was the efficacy of the half-native doctor's treatment of his sister. For she was really ill, and it was impossible to get hold of a European physician in this out of the way and secluded spot. But Ghita, the doe-eyed ayah, was an intelligent as well as a faithful nurse. And she was certainly better off in this mountain climate than she would have been had they remained in Bombay, with the plague stalking through its ugly alleys.

His time lay heavy on his hands, as fascinating as Lahlook would have been to him under happier conditions. But it did not take long for him to weary of solitary whisky-and-sodas, of indifferent chess games with Bovary, who was idle now that his small hostelry was all but empty. For he did not like to leave the square-paved courtyard until Laura was better.

On the third day her fever broke, thanks to Ghita's vigilant attentions, and Pascal, supremely relieved, felt free to stretch his legs.

He had forgotten the hushed pall of

impending doom that lay upon the city. This brilliant, brazen day it was more tense, more tangible, than it had been even while the unloved prince had had himself borne through the narrow streets. The shops, the bazaars, were empty. His very footsteps rang out ominously as he retraced his way toward the abode of the little man he had succored at so timely a moment. It might be interesting to bargain for that rug.

The vast silence was broken by a deep, melodious peal. His skin crawled for an instant until he remembered that this was the hour of prayer. That deep summons was only the temple gong, just beyond the city wall.

Then he saw the great gates at the foot of the hilly slope begin slowly to close. Breathless, he watched them gradually shut out the arch of the cobalt sky, the tufting fronds of the sacred grove. They clanged shut, their great bars falling into place. Why, the city was a fortress! What next! Blank windows, empty streets, and silence.

There was a padded footstep, and he looked down to see a thin, brown hand laid upon his arm. The monkeylike face of Sukra Lal was lifted to his.

"Sahib, it would be wise for you to follow me quickly. Beneath my house there is a secret way. You are not safe here!"

He shook off the plucking hand upon his arm. For magically, like the repetition of a dream, through the arch at the head of the street came a small cavalcade, grouped about a golden ark, treasure laden. *

"She comes, surrounded by the raja's servants," the merchant whispered sibilantly. "But too late! Now the gates are closed, and none may leave the city. Long months ago she should have ridden forth from Lahlook in the rani's own litter—never to return. Sahib, let me guide you to safety."

As if at some given signal, a score of

armed men sprang up from concealment so complete that Pascal thought of the legendary warriors who sprouted, full fledged and armed, from the earth sown with dragon's teeth. These men flashed forward upon the litter.

"Sahib, would you give your life for the fair-haired dancing girl?" begged Sukra Lal.

Pascal only heard the child's terrified scream, saw a woman's golden head as one of the attacking party wrenched away the silk curtains and fell, mortally wounded by the blade of one of the faithful.

It was the wildest unreality, of course. Things like this didn't happen even in Northern India. But he felt for the revolver he had thrust impulsively in his pocket earlier in the day. The yellow-haired siren was a woman, after all, to be served in her hour of need. And there was a child in her arms.

It was amazingly possible to break through the bloody mêlée and reach the side of the litter. His revolver spit well-aimed fire twice, and two men who would have downed him dropped limply. He glimpsed a slender woman in a sheer, black frock, looked into a pair of deeply blue eyes that met his unafraid as she shielded with her own beautiful body a panic-stricken boy of six or seven, turbanned, bejeweled, a cowed little princeling.

He told himself that the boy would be unharmed. Not even one of the revolutionists would touch a hair of the head of the rajah's only son. But the woman!

He swung her into his arms, dragged the child from the litter, and pressed through the swaying men. A huge Sikh loomed in front of him, brandishing a saber. The man fell back, shot through the thigh, but not before Pascal felt a burning pain in his shoulder, set his teeth as the tingling warmth of blood dyed his shirt, his light coat.

Thank God, they were close to the cavelike entrance of Sukra Lal's shop. What had he said about a secret passage?

"Let us in, Sukra Lal. There's no time to lose." Was the fool protesting? "I saved you. Does the debt go unpaid?"

It was pitch dark in the musty place as the heavy door closed after them, and the merchant barred it.

"You are hurt!" mourned a lovely voice.

"A scratch, but it is bleeding a good deal. If I could have some water—"

"Downstairs, sahib, I beg of you. There you will be safe."

The wizened, brown man held a glimmering light so that they saw his wares of silks and spices and woven stuffs, strangely bright and beautiful against the dirt floor, the ancient stone walls. He stooped, wrenched at a ring in the floor, and they gazed down into utter blackness. Merle remembered dim, ugly legends of vanished men as he swung himself down.

"When I give the word pass the boy down."

The steep steps which he had to descend by touch seemed endless. But at last his feet found solid ground, and he struck a match. A dank, malodorous hole, this underground chamber, but both solid and secret. It had filled many uses, Pascal did not doubt.

But he dispelled his grim imaginings when the velvet dark was electrified with the palpitant presence of the woman. He guided her down, his uninjured arm supporting her, found himself wondering if the sweet hint of crushed violets came from her clothes or her hair.

The princeling whimpered unheard in a corner. Sukra Lal brought water, lint dressings, a tallow light, and the lady of the rajah's household knelt beside Pascal, stripping the wet linen from his still bleeding shoulder.

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"Please!" He tried to discourage her ministrations, flushing to the crisp line of his thick, dark hair, which, she thought, grew beautifully from his good forehead.

"This must be a beastly task for your hands; women dislike the sight of blood, I know!"

Her delicious mouth curved, but her eyes stayed grave under their lashes.

"Even though it has been shed in their defense? Oh, I'm hurting you! How sorry I am!"

Such women were born with the desire to please, Pascal supposed. How charmingly she used her voice—an instrument of delight in itself—with hardly a suggestion of accent.

"Please don't concern yourself about my arm," he begged. "It's nothing. The matter of real importance is your safe return to the palace." He rolled down his sleeve, secretly impressed with the competence of her white hands. "And that, I confess, I'm at a loss to engineer."

It occurred to him that Indian princes had been known to harbor jealousy. The dryness of his tone was not lost upon her, he saw.

"I have no wish to return to the palace, I assure you." Her words were tinged neither with pathos nor appeal, though his imagination vested them with both. The princeling's wail spared him the necessity of response.

"I want to go home, Adrienne. I want my father, and my new white peacocks!"

She drew him into her arms.

"We will go soon, dear. Hush, hush! Remember that you are captain of the rajah's troops. Soldiers never cry.

"You know, of course, that there is—revolt abroad! There is danger, as well." Her voice quivered. "It seemed wiser to take the boy out of the city, to sanctuary. You see what happened. If it had not been for your help—" Her hand rested on his.

After a silent moment he spoke.

"Nothing remains, mademoiselle, but to return you and the boy in safety to the palace. It must be accomplished. Only then shall I feel that my responsibility is—ended."

The subtle intent of his words reached her. It must have puzzled her a little to find a man who only wanted to escape her net of allure. But she answered him gently.

"You are very good. But your responsibility is already at an end. Sukra Lal"—sullen, his small black eyes veiled with hostility, he bent his head—"you must send, or take, a message to the palace. With this ring—"

She drew from the child's hand a signet, jewel set, and borrowing Pascal's pen, scrawled a few words on the back of an envelope.

"I cannot do this thing, mem-sahib."

"Not for the sake of this prince of yours—for his frightened mother?"

That was a bit breath taking. That she, the usurper of the maharani's glory, should use her in this fashion! Strange how the girl seemed to love the little bejeweled boy! And he adored her obviously. Pascal hardened. The supreme cruelty of using that charm of hers to win the son as well as the father!

"Does the sahib command it?" asked Sukra Lal.

"They must have safe escort to the king," said Pascal shortly. "And see whether the fracas has quieted down or not. I must get back to the hotel."

"To whom am I indebted?" asked the Frenchwoman at last.

He told her. If her dignity were not underlaid with pleading! Her blue eyes had the candor, the little yearning look, of a lonely child.

Sukra Lal came scuttling down upon them. The battle was ended; the street cleared. The sahib could leave by the rear entrance to the shop and return to his quarter unmolested.

"You have been kind," said the honey-haired Frenchwoman. "You have been—my friend. Shall you stay long in this wretched place?"

Why should she voice her restless discontent to him, he wondered.

"I do not know, mademoiselle." He bowed stiffly above her outstretched hand. "In any event, our paths will scarcely converge again. Good-by."

He uttered the brusque words because he was quelling an impelling desire to make sure of seeing her again. He was unprepared for the tears that stood in her eyes, making them unbelievably tender. He softened. She must understand.

"Surely you have no need of friends—*you*, who ride in the royal palanquin, who dwell in the palace of the king!"

Her brief, bitter laugh was to haunt him.

"But supposing that that need should arise, then could I count on you?"

His hesitation turned her desperate. Her soft palms struck each other fiercely.

"Ah, how little you understand! Mr. Pascal, I am in danger; I am friendless, alone. Only crumbling palace walls stand between me—and this child whom I love—and the hostility, the hatred the rajah has bred. You have never known a woman so friendless, so devoid of human ties. Some queer fate threw me into your arms this morning." She smiled sadly. "They were stalwart, brave arms."

"They will defend you, should the need arise!" he promised impulsively. "Mademoiselle, you belittle your own spell. No one could see you, know you, and not fight for you, I think."

Her gentleness, her beauty, did cast a spell all its own. Such a spell as the eternal Helen spun long ago with the silk of her red-gold tresses, the magic of her lips and laughter.

He fought off its intangible, bright meshes.

"If the rising storm should threaten your safety, send for me!"

"You're good—good! Listen; if the worst happens, I'll manage to send you one word: come. Do you know where the palace lies?"

He nodded.

"Follow the almost ruined eastern wall. You can creep unseen in the shadow until you come to a thick growth of moonflowers that mantels one portion of it. There—ah, if you knew what secret cunning it's taken to accomplish this—I've had hewed a narrow opening, hidden by the vines. Climb through it, and you will find yourself in the Path of the Peacocks."

"And that is—"

"An ancient, flagged walk that leads to the zenana—the woman's quarters. It is beautiful, sheltered, with strange flowers blooming against the flags, and whispering vines overhanging the eastern wall, swaying against your face like soft fingers. The white peacocks strut there by day. And the women pace its length." She shivered. "I'm so tired of it all! But you must follow the path until you reach the bathing pool. There, by the fountain, I'll wait for you with the child. Will you come, Merle Pascal?"

Her voice, lilting thing that it was, made music of his name.

"You have my promise."

Did Sukra Lal wish to warn him?

"The sahib had best go now while the way is open!"

He left her there, thrown in bright and beautiful relief against the ugly dark by the light in her hand, one arm about the shoulders of the wan princeeling, who, in spite of his gold chains, his brave feathers, and royal trappings, was only a frightened child. And she, thought Pascal, in spite of the glamorous sin that mantled her, in spite of her golden hair, her lips' enchantment, her Circe veil of allurement, was only a woman, imperiled by her own loveliness.

When he reached the sun-swept emptiness of the street he had to touch his bandaged, stiffening arm to assure himself of the reality of the hour. He reached the hotel unmolested, safe save for the appalling weakness that his wounds suddenly brought upon him.

He found Laura much better, but anxious about him.

It puzzled him for some time to determine just why he lied to her so consistently and well as to the origin of his bandaged shoulder. For he was firmly convinced that Mademoiselle Caspard was unworthy of such a subterfuge.

A waxen moon hung like a pale coin over the inky silhouette of the city. Indian night offers sharp contrasts; contrasts of pallor and dense darkness, of magic beauty and foul shadows, of faint, reedy song, and murmurous silence, and the sharp clatter of angry tongues, and yelping curs.

Pascal lingered at his window, sleepless, taut nerved. For twenty-four hours after the attack on the Frenchwoman's palanquin Lahlook had lain shrouded in sullen quiet. Now the city of siege was stirring, stirring.

The rising murmur could be felt, rather than heard. It was something more than the sharp baying of dogs, whispers of unseen women, hushed footsteps. It was a strange, awakening tremor.

"Home—and sanity," thought Pascal, trying not to listen. What was he waiting to hear, he wondered, that he should always be leaning forward, alert?

A little later he knew. Suddenly, so that silence was made of the murmurous whispers of the city, a distant thunderclap sounded; and then another; and still another.

To the north of the city the palace itself was being stormed. He knew it before a faint glare lit up the skies.

It did not take him five minutes to

fling on riding clothes, strap a pistol holster about him. But when he reached the street it was a seething human mass. The tremendous excitement that swayed the brown populace stirred him with its fever. He found the innkeeper at last.

"What's happening?"

"The angry people are at the palace gates, sahib; the white woman must end her rule to-night."

A horseman came riding toward them, the passage pressed clear for his spirited mount closing behind him densely. Pascal saw the rider swing off the winded beast and wriggle toward them

"Pascal Sahib?"

His heart leaped.

"Yes."

The servant slipped a note into his hand.

"Lose yourself in the crowd," Pascal told the man. "I'll take your horse."

On the tissue-fine sheet of paper, wax sealed, one word danced blackly against his vision before he destroyed it. That summons—the word was "come" with a hastily scrawled A. C. for signature—brought him to the sweating flank of the horse. In a bewitched moment he had given Mademoiselle Caspard his word. He would keep it.

Pascal did not head for the palace, of course. Later he could change his course. For he guessed that none of these wailing men and women would stop him. The active revolutionists were at the palace gates. Their assault still volleyed like thunder.

He lashed his horse mercilessly when it seemed to him that the return reports were long in coming, or brief in duration. If those brown devils rammed their way into the palace, found her there in the latticed chamber of the maharajah— However much she had caviled at life, she would face the end with courage, he knew. He told himself that he must not forget how she had waited in the litter, pale lips locked,

shielding the cowering princeling with her own body.

He need not have feared he would forget; this, and other glamorous moments, were all that he remembered, he admitted sardonically. So much so that now he, Merle Pascal, quick-witted evader of soft wiles, was riding into danger, to save her from the fate she so thoroughly deserved, because she had won his promise!

By following her directions he found his approach to the palace was unmolested. This almost-ruined, vine-clad wall must be the eastern wall. He dismounted, tethered his horse at a little distance. Then, ears quickened to the volleys of fire that were directed against the studded gates—not so far off but that the red blaze, the shouting of the soldiery, were as clear in the still night as a stage battle to a man in the rear of a great theater—he ran along the shadow of the wall. Once a group of armed men tore past him, on their way to join their companions in the attack. He flattened himself under the vines and stayed undisturbed. But that was all. A little later he came upon the thick growth of moonflowers, waxen-pale things glistening against the heavy greenery, that had served its purpose so well. How fateful that this opening, large enough for a man to climb through with ease, had remained undiscovered, undisturbed, all this time! And how fortunate the lovely French-woman had spent some of her dragging time and energy in evolving some means of escape, in case the hatred of the raja's people should ever rear itself against her, imprisoning her in its vast confines.

Pascal found himself in a flagged, flowered walk. This, then, was the Path of the Peacocks. Here the innocent, vain children of women's stature spent their idle hours in the palace of their lord. Here the white peacocks breasted them, proud feathers unfurled.

Confusion was spreading throughout the quarters of the women, he saw. Shrill cries came from the inner court. One flying, silk-swathed figure plunged from an arched doorway straight into his arm, chattering some desperate tale that he could not understand. He released her, came suddenly upon a sunken pool in a sheltered spot. But no fair-haired woman with a child in her arms awaited him. Had her fate already befallen her?

He, a stranger, was passing unmolested where a day, an hour, before his presence would have meant his death. The zenana is sacred, not to be defiled by the eye or foot of man.

The grilled doors were open, crowded with wailing women. He might enter the palace. With luck—luck was with him, evidently, for, unnoticed, he snatched up a length of raw silk, an abandoned robe, and wrapped it about himself. The voluminous garment served as ample protection. A woman clutched his arm, unseeing, blind with terror. In her jargon he thought he recognized an English word. He shook her violently.

"Where is the French mademoiselle?" he demanded. "Take me to her!"

She stared at him stupidly.

"The white lady."

Her look of hatred, her recoil, told him she understood. He managed to draw from her flood of invective some notion of her position here. But he also got his bearings. He sped down a tiled passage, still having seen no man, stopped before a great grilled door. He knocked. Silence. But he felt the presence of some one within the chambers. His knock, quick, light, reassuring, brought footsteps.

"A friend," he answered the frightened query.

Cautiously the door was opened, admitting him. He unwound the cumbersome mantle of silk, strode to where, on a brocaded couch beneath a gold pea-

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cock with spreading tail, the woman lay face downward.

Only the golden tresses, disordered now, reminded him of the black-clad girl of the litter. For this woman, her gracile, down-flung body wrapped in cloth of gold, her bare, beautiful shoulders heaving with her sobs, was the real usurper of the maharani's throne and husband. That other—the wistful, unhappily lovely creature who had knelt beside him, bound up his arm—she was only the figment of his romantic dreams embodied in alluring flesh. The ayah who had admitted him swung shut the heavy door. He turned toward the crouching woman.

Mademoiselle Caspard screamed, shuddered down into the cushions. He laid his hand on her shoulder.

"Pull yourself together," he commanded shortly. "I'll get you out of this, somehow."

She flashed up from her couch, and he dazedly found himself staring into the grief-ravaged but beautiful features of a woman who wore peacock feathers in her golden hair, great emeralds on her soft, bare bosom—a woman he had never seen in his life.

"Who are you, m'sieur?" she cried in sweet, hoarse tones.

He drew deep breath, the wonder of it all sweeping over him in a tide of happy release.

"A fool, mademoiselle."

Time was precious.

"Where is the older white woman—she who cares for the child?" he demanded. "I must find her first."

Through the grilled opening in the door came a childish wail. Bare feet sounded in the passage. The Frenchwoman sprang past him, flung wide the door, and snatched up the unwilling lad who beat at her with his small fists, screaming lustily.

A pallid servant came flying.

"Mademoiselle, they are in the grounds. You must fly! Listen!"

An ugly, growing sound reached their ears.

"The other!" begged Pascal frantically. "There is no time to lose!"

She looked about her shuddering.

"Go? Leave my jewels, my robes? Never!"

She clung to the disheveled, weeping child as if he were the loot whose safety her Gallic greed demanded before her own.

"I won't, I tell you."

"But the child—"

She snarled at him fiercely, fended him off.

"Mapo stays with me—what you call my hostage, m'sieur!" she told him triumphantly. "Be still, child. All Kahmurt, that hate me so, love this dark-skinned boy. If they break in this room—threaten me—me—"

Her free hand struck her breast triumphantly.

"This toy dagger will be plunged into his heart."

He wheeled as a well-remembered voice called from the threshold.

"No, Mees Casson, you do not take him from me!" taunted the French doll. "This time his mother mus' whine for him in vain."

"You came!" she whispered to Pascal.

"Seeking you—here!" He was very humble. "My dear, I didn't guess."

She understood, but turned to the Parisienne beseechingly, her lovely eyes imploring.

"Mademoiselle, the boy may be endangered. Give him to me, and let me try to leave. I think I know a way!"

"Without my jewels, my priceless things? Never! No, M'am'selle Casson, I trade my safety, my possessions, for this boy! I am no fool, me!"

But just then another, a deafening, explosion almost shattered their ear-drums. The Parisienne shrieked, losing her hold upon the boy. And as a human tide, relentless, implacable, surged down the corridors Pascal

snatched the child, drew Adrienne Casson into the shelter of his arm, and made for the gardens.

"She'll be killed," mourned the girl. "How horrible—how pitiful!"

"How just!" said Pascal grimly. "What's this?"

A mighty humming sounded above them, about them, like a million giant bees. Against the pallor of the moon-kissed earth a great dark shape glided, settled.

Two men scrambled from the plane, came toward them. With utter relief Pascal recognized the British uniforms, saluted. Briefly they explained their part in the amazing happening.

"There's been trouble stirring here for some time," admitted the man with the two silver bars. "But they got the start of us. These out-of-the-way principalities are usually hornets' nests. We weren't aware that another white woman was in the rajah's palace, Miss —er—"

"Adrienne Casson," supplemented the girl on Pascal's arm. "I am the prince's governess. My father, Doctor Casson, died a year ago in Calcutta. I accepted this post and have been here ever since. Mr. Pascal came to my

rescue yesterday when I was trying to take Mapo out of Lahlook."

Her lovely eyes glinted mirth at him. The younger officer sighed, no doubt wishing that he had been her knight at arms.

From the peaceful night skies, where twin planes looped just overhead, came a rocket of peril, to blast a great chasm in the near-by hillside.

"They've got to understand that we're here," said the senior officer grimly. "If either of you had been harmed, there'd have been the devil to pay. As it is, I'll send you back to your hotel under armed escort. Will you take charge of Miss Casson?"

"That," said Pascal serenely, "is my ardent intention!"

And some time later, in the paved court of the hotel, which the night had drenched with beauty, Pascal managed to make clear to her just how inclusive that intention was. And Adrienne, exquisite in a furred wrap of his sister's—Laura had not been too tired to receive them both with frantic open arms, to amuse herself with pleasant conjectures about it all—quite willing to acquiesce, entrusted herself to him permanently.



THAT treasure lurks in hidden places the contractors for razing the walls of Canton, China, agree. They offered to undertake the work, in order to make room for a street railway, in return for whatever treasure the wall might contain. Such quantities of ancient coin and ornaments were uncovered that the work, though done without actual money payment, was more than profitable.



LISSIE" it is, so let it be. The Duchess of York has requested the newspapers to stop referring to her as "Lady Betty." She says her friends call her Lizzie, and she prefers it. There is no accounting for taste.



EMERALDS are the jewel of the moment. Princess Mary's choice of an emerald for an engagement ring established the fad, and the Duchess of York, now her sister-in-law, followed suit. Now all fiancées want emeralds instead of diamonds. The English royal family possesses the most choice emerald necklace in the world. Queen Mary has been wearing it recently at court functions. But she is said to prefer diamonds and pearls.



The Scapegoat

By Josephine Meyer

Author of "Sin of the Saintly," "Seven Years," etc.



ANN MUIR was on her knees beside the bed, praying.

She was not the type one would suspect of being subject to this sort of emotional outpouring. On the contrary, her poise, combined with her serene face and quietly moving body, gave an impression of coldness. Years of hospital training and association with physicians in a strictly scientific atmosphere had cast over her a veil of philosophic irony. She never went to church. She was regarded as irreverent.

In her girlhood, religion had been strong and helpful to her. For a while she had lost the need of it, but in the last three years, spent nursing with the Red Cross in Europe, she had, like many others, been driven by the tyranny of war to "catch at God's skirts and pray," to preserve her faith in humanity by shifting responsibility for the holocaust upon some inscrutable but beneficent plan.

She had returned to America the day before and had come to Fairlea a few hours ago to visit her cousin, Clarisse Valory. Clarisse, seven years her junior, had been brought up by Ann's mother and more particularly by Ann, herself, who loved the vivid, dark-haired, slender girl more dearly than any one else in the world. It was because of Clarisse that Ann was on her knees now. Her quick eye, trained by

practice, rendered keen by affection, had seen in the younger woman a change which the mere passing of three years could not entirely account for. Clarisse, her little Clarisse was poignantly unhappy and concealing her state with a nervous buoyancy Ann dreaded as the prelude to a serious breakdown.

In vain Ann strove to fathom the cause of this. Clarisse, who had always come to her in trouble, confessing to her the inmost secrets of her heart, now displayed neurotic cunning in keeping her at bay. Ann had tactfully given her cousin a chance to confess to an unhappy marriage. She did not know George Valory well; she had been on an out-of-town case most of the winter in which he had courted Clarisse and she had left for overseas but a month or two after their honeymoon. But Clarisse's references to her husband were unhesitating, cordial, and sincere. He was away from home a good deal, traveling for the publishing firm of which he was the junior partner. That was why he was away now. He was doing well and denied his wife nothing.

She wanted a motor car, but it was not a necessity, as the Erskines who lived next door owned one and shared it with her as though she had some right to it. Ann had met Bess Erskine and the Erskine car at the station, for Bess had insisted on helping Clarisse call for her. And later Ann had had a glimpse

of Raymond Erskin, Bess' popular and romantic-looking husband, whose invitation to join him and his wife at the movies that night she had declined, and she had been astonished to see this refusal disappointed Clarisse. They were charming neighbors; Clarisse was enthusiastic especially over Bess. But to want to go out with them on their first night together in three years!

Clearly it was to avoid being alone with her former confidante. Clarisse's withdrawal of herself seemed tinged with dread. She joked too flippantly, she laughed too much, and the brightness of her eyes bespoke feverish excitement. Ann saw she only drove her friend farther from her in her attempts to win her trust. Troubled and desperate she saw that for the time being she must give up. She had professed fatigue and proposed early bed, and Clarisse had readily shown her to her room and left her there.

Oh, the vacuous hospitality of that dainty guest room which made her feel no more than the casual guest, the outsider, the onlooker! Her memories of the past did not seem able to give her any claim on Clarisse for they were of another Clarisse who no longer existed.

It had been under the blow of this thought that she had been beaten to her knees. At first her supplication had been that this might not be so, that she might not be thus deprived of the one love she possessed. Then her old habit of taking care of Clarisse, of sacrificing herself for her cousin, came uppermost with the thought of her hidden trouble.

"God," begged Ann, "let me suffer in her stead! Take away her grief and give it to me. How cheerfully I would bear it, how gladly I would take up her cross! Try me, God! Answer me! Give me the chance, I beg!"

Quiet succeeded her wild outburst. She remained for some time tasting the

peace of utter faith, her head pillow'd against the edge of the bed. Nothing would give her more happiness, she thought, than suffering in place of her friend.

The sound of a motor car driving in next door at length broke the spell. She rose. From her prettily curtained windows she could see the filmy reach of the headlights of the car painting disks of color and form upon the blackness of the night. The car stopped at the porte-cochère, apparently to deposit Bess, then proceeded to the garage.

Ann moved to the bureau and took down and braided her hair. That done, she approached the window to draw the blind. It was a beautiful night and something of the religious fervor which had so tempestuously caused her to pray again seized her as she raised her eyes to the stars. Through the open window came the cool scent of the garden and the singing of summer insects. She pushed up the screen and thrust her head out, feeling the dark healing on her forehead and her flushed eyes.

"We exaggerate our woes," she thought, taking a deep full breath of the sweet air. The sound of low voices came to her ear. Two dimly seen figures were standing near in the shadow of the hedge. Ann looked down upon them benignly, like a goddess. She thought she discerned the white uniform of Clarisse's maid.

She drew back into her room refreshed and quieted. She wondered if Clarisse were asleep. She wished to share her tranquillity with her dear one, and went quietly to Clarisse's door and knocked. There was no answer even when she repeated the knock.

"She's asleep," reflected Ann, and quite unconsciously tried the handle. It turned, the door opened, and Ann felt a thrill of joy. "She expected me to come. Shall I wake her?" She crept cautiously into the room and over

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to the bed, her eyes filled with the misty tenderness of a mother visiting her sleeping child. The look was wasted on an empty pillow. The bed had not been touched, and Clarisse's night things lay neatly spread across it.

Ann gazed about the room startled, half expecting to find Clarisse sitting somewhere hidden in the dark, but there was no one there.

"Perhaps she's ill and has gone downstairs for hot water or something," was the natural inference of the trained nurse, followed by the equally natural intention to help. She had switched on the lights, and now she turned them off and descended the stairs. To her amazement all here was in darkness and equally deserted. She bethought herself of the servant she had seen standing near the hedge and decided to call and question her.

"Nettie!" called Ann. There was no reply, and she repeated the call as she stepped out upon the little back porch. "Is Nettie there?" she added.

A white figure glided into view.

"Ann!" exclaimed Clarisse's voice breathlessly. "What is the matter? Are you sleepwalking?"

"Oh, Clarisse, it's you!" ejaculated Ann. "I'm so relieved. I couldn't find you."

"Poor old Ann, did I give you a scare?"

"Yes, you did, dear. I thought you were in bed. What on earth were you doing, and with whom were you talking?"

"What do you mean?"

"I saw you by the hedge. I thought it was Nettie."

"With Raymond. I heard their car come back, and remembered something I had to ask him."

"At this hour of the night?"

"It was—it was something I wanted him to get for me in New York. He goes in so early in the morning I would not have a chance to see him then."

They had entered the house. Clarisse locked the back door and affectionately steered Ann through the kitchen to the safe channel of the hall.

"I thought you were so tired, Ann, dear," she cooed tenderly, "otherwise we might have stayed up later. It's a lovely, lovely night."

Ann could not bring herself to reply. She was desperately fighting a tendency to shrink from Clarisse's caresses because she knew they were not sincere. She was both hurt and alarmed.

"Raymond says we missed a good picture," went on Clarisse as they mounted the stairs, "and I have a trade-last for you from Bess."

In the light of the upper hall the expression on Ann's countenance became visible.

"Good heavens, Ann, how solemn you look!" laughed Clarisse. "What have I done to shock you so?"

"Excuse me, dear. I think it must be a—a sort of reaction from the fright I had," stammered Ann, flushing and turning to her door. "Good night."

"Aren't you going to kiss me? Come, let me come in and put you to bed, my dear old Nanny. It's the least I can do after upsetting you so."

She chattered gayly as she helped Ann undress. She used endearing words and petted her like a fond mother, but to Ann all this was worse than meaningless now. Discouragement had an equal share with the resolution to be patient, in causing her to abandon hope of getting closer to her friend that night.

The next morning while they were at breakfast the Erskines drove by and sounded their motor horn.

"Clarisse!" called Raymond's deep voice. "Oh, Clarisse, want anything in New York?"

Ann crimsoned for her friend, but Clarisse's face exhibited no confusion.

"Coming," she called blithely, going

out on the porch. Ann sat listening to the merry trio outside. She could hear Bess laugh and the high exclamation in her lazy voice breaking in on the other two. She tried to keep her attention on the newspaper and sipped her tasteless coffee. A postman's whistle added itself to the other outdoor sounds, and Nettie went out to fetch the mail. She came back with a letter for Ann.

"Me?" Ann looked surprised. It had been forwarded from her hotel and she recognized the handwriting of a sister nurse. It was dated Sandy Beach, where Ann owned a bungalow with this girl and another. It read:

It's so restful here. I am too lazy to think. I know you got home this week, and I am crazy to see you, but I go on a case Saturday. Could you get down here before then? Sterritt is still with her cardiac, with no chance of getting off this summer. She writes they live high, but she longs for the bungalow. She is right. You must get down soon, or it will be empty and wasted.

At this moment Clarisse entered carrying more letters and a little bunch of late roses. She handed the roses to Ann with an elaborate bow.

"Bess sends you these from her garden, with her compliments, and requests the pleasure of your presence at dinner to-night. Her brother's coming down, and Raymond's invited a friend so it won't be a lone-man affair. We're to dress up pretty. You got a letter, didn't you?"

"Yes," answered Ann. "From Frances Hibben."

"I remember her, pale and tall," nodded Clarisse. "I've one from George, poor dear, which makes me realize guiltily that I haven't written him in three or four days."

"Does he write every day?"

"Not any more, but every two days is devotion, isn't it?" She spread out the letter with the cursory glance of the only moderately interested. "By the way," she added, looking up before she

had fairly begun to read, "Bess is coming back to take me to market after she leaves Raymond at the station, and you're to come along. So no excuses, dear."

"Thank you." Ann made a great show of indifference as she added, "I thought you said Mr. Erskine was going into town early this morning."

"Did I?"

"That's why you had to see him last night—to give him some commission," Ann reminded her gently.

"That's so. I forgot. He *was* going in early, but I guess he overslept. He often does such things. I suppose his irresponsibility is part of his fascination," she took refuge in her letter, commenting upon it immediately to change the subject. "George is on his way to Buffalo. He says the trains are hot. He likes to suffer on these trips because it makes him think he's working."

"Shall I write him a line telling him how you are?" asked Ann evenly.

"Wouldn't that be sweet of you! Then I needn't write till to-morrow. Here's his address."

"Clarisse," said Ann when she had copied it, "will you come down to Sandy Beach with me for a couple of weeks?"

"Oh, no!" answered Clarisse quickly, taken aback. "I mean I—I couldn't leave the house alone."

"There's Nettie."

"But George might come home at any moment."

"We could write him to come to Sandy Beach. You're looking a little thin and nervous and it would do you good, dear."

"Well, if that's what you're going to write to George about me, please don't. He'd chase home in a terrible panic," exclaimed Clarisse irritably. "I'm perfectly well, and I don't want to go away. If you care more for the sea than for me, you can go, but I shall

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stay here." She rose and, gathering up her letter, went out of the room.

Ann went out on the porch and stood for some time staring unseeingly at the bees and butterflies so busy about the gay-colored flower beds. She was baffled by Clarisse's transformation, she even doubted her rights over this changeling. Presently she heard a light footfall behind her. The next moment Clarisse's contrite head was on her shoulder.

"Dear old Ann, forgive me. I'll never snap like that again."

They embraced tenderly.

"But we won't go away, Nanny," whispered Clarisse. "You'll be happy here, won't you?"

Clarisse proposed they should rest in the afternoon so as to be at their best for the dinner party. Ann, now sensitive to this evident desire of Clarisse to avoid being alone with her, remained in her room writing letters. Once from her window she saw Clarisse pottering among her flower beds and once she heard her carrying on a shouted conversation about zenias across the hedge with Bess.

At six Clarisse knocked on Ann's door.

"We must start dressing, Nanny," she warned, poking her head in.

"You haven't rested much, dear."

"Me? Oh, I can't lie down. Working in the garden rests me—the smells and the colors." Clarisse's shining eyes almost atoned for the tired lines in her face.

"Lie down for a few minutes, dear, and let me massage your forehead," suggested Ann. She added hastily, "I won't talk."

"Oh, yes, I should like a massage, and it will make me beautiful," exclaimed Clarisse.

None the less she had recourse to rouge before she left the house. Ann watched her apply it and sighed. At

twenty-five she had no right to look jaded.

Bess took them to her room to remove their wraps. Clarisse was in deep yellow. Bess looked her over keenly as her mother might have done.

"I have some black Spanish lace that would go with that perfectly," she said at last critically. "And this red rose, it's the last of them." She took the scarf from a scented drawer and removed the rose from the slender flower jar on her table. Before she had a chance to adjust them her maid appeared and called her aside with a whispered question and, excusing herself, Bess left the room.

"Can I help drape it?" asked Ann.

"No, thanks, I can manage," replied Clarisse.

Ann turned away and was smoothing her hair when she suddenly heard a husky exclamation from Clarisse, something not unlike a suppressed sob. Clarisse had thrown the scarf upon the floor, the rose on top of it, torn and crumpled as though she had snatched it with some violence from her dress. She had gone to the window and was standing rigidly beside it staring into the dusk.

"Is anything the matter, dear?" asked Ann in a quiet, natural voice.

"No." The abruptness of the answer made it a manifest lie. Ann crossed the room silently, picked up the rose and scarf and, laying the former on the dressing table, prepared to fold the latter neatly.

"You don't wish to wear it?" she asked.

"No—no—no!" cried Clarisse.

Ann laid it beside the rose and went close to her friend.

"You must control yourself," she said gently. As though her advice had been the opposite, Clarisse threw herself upon Ann's breast.

"I can't wear her lace. I can't!" she sobbed hysterically.

"But, my darling, why should you think you have to?" demanded Ann astonished. "Don't be a baby."

"No, she mustn't see me crying. I've ruined all my make-up. Where does she keep her rouge?" She recovered herself with surprising quickness and began searching in the drawer of the dressing table. "I'll wear her rose. I must. She's so good and kind. You can see one can't help loving her."

"Do you think I'm jealous, dear?"

"You? No. As if there could be any one before you, Ann! Now, where does she keep her rouge?"

"Perhaps she doesn't use any," suggested Ann.

"Perhaps not, with her complexion. Besides, hers would be fatal on my dark, dingy skin. Powder will have to do me. Oh, I'm a fright. I'll have to use the scarf anyway. It does help, doesn't it?" She snatched it up quickly and threw it around her. With her pale face, flushed eyelids, and red lips, the effect was excellent. She smiled at her own image. "There, who says crying is unbecoming?" she demanded.

Bess' brother was very like her, large, blond, and quiet to the point of stolidity. Clarisse had made Ann a bit self-conscious about meeting him by referring to him playfully as a possible suitor. But Ann found he was intelligently interested in reconstruction work and her experiences abroad were absorbing to him. The other guest was an amateur musician, and Bess was the only other musically inclined person in the party. Thus they naturally split up into pairs, Raymond and Clarisse falling to each other's lot. When the party broke up Bess' brother offered himself as escort to the two visitors.

"Raymond is coming," said Clarisse; "he's to perform an operation on the hot water faucet in my pantry. Bring a wrench, Raymond."

"Sure," answered Raymond. "I'll

stop that drip if I have to dry up the hot water forever."

"Any objection to two escorts?" asked Bess' brother.

"The more the safer," said Clarisse. They went across the dew-wet grass in the moonlight and through a break in the hedge. Clarisse switched on a light in the hall and slipped off her cloak. Ann noticed how vivid the red rose looked against the gold dress without the black lace of the scarf to soften it. Ann remained in the hall with Bess' brother, aware of the lengthening minutes until Clarisse and Raymond returned.

"Subdued at last," said Raymond. "It was quite a job. I shall buy a blowpipe and a stick of lead and get rich in trade."

They said good night, and Ann followed Clarisse upstairs.

"Bess' brother is smitten, Ann," said Clarisse teasingly. "It's done you good to go to France. You used to be so mean to men and to-night you actually flirted. I hope you noticed how Raymond and I managed to give you an extra quarter of an hour alone together."

She turned to face Ann, who instantly missed a note of color in her dress.

"Where is your rose?" she asked.

Clarisse clapped her hand to her waist.

"Gone. It must have broken off under my cloak."

"No," answered Ann. "It was there when you took off your cloak."

"Oh, I remember. I—I knocked against something in the pantry." Clarisse looked confused. "Good night, Ann."

"Dear," begged Ann, putting out her hand to detain her, "why won't you trust me?"

"Trust you? I don't understand," Clarisse's face went white, her eyes grew cold and angry.

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"I have a heart. I do understand," ventured Ann boldly. "You think you are in love with Raymond Erskine."

"Ann! Oh, Ann, how dare you!" breathed Clarisse raucously.

"Deny it, child!" pleaded Ann.

"I—I do," whispered Clarisse.

"But not convincingly. Oh, remember, I did not say you were in love with him, only that you think you are!"

"You've gone mad! Raymond? Why he's nothing more than a neighbor, a friend. Bess' husband. Let me by. — I'm tired. I want to go to bed!" She pushed past Ann, her breast heaving, her hands trembling, and in a moment she had disappeared into her room.

Ann stood for a moment on the verge of tears herself. She was baffled but not deceived by Clarisse's denial. She wondered again at her own insistent interference. Oh, why was George away so much! Why wasn't he here now? That was the solution: to bring him home, and as soon as possible. She made up her mind to write to him at once.

She was at her desk composing the difficult letter when she heard her door open softly and, looking around, beheld Clarisse. She pushed aside the letter and rose.

"What are you doing?" asked Clarisse. "I saw your light."

"I could not go right to bed," prevaricated Ann.

"Did—did I hurt you, Ann?"

"What do you want me to say, dear?"

"I think I'm crazy. I'm bad. I don't know what to do," gasped Clarisse, throwing herself into Ann's arms.

"Clarrie, my precious! Tell me everything. I love you far dearer than you know."

"How can you love me when I hate myself? I love Bess—you know I love Bess. Tell me you believe me!"

"Yes, dear."

"Can one love and—and betray?"
"Clarisse!"

"I do love him, I do love Raymond! Every time I see him my heart bounds. I am happy he is alive and that he lives next door. It would be worse than death to give him up."

"And what about George?"

"He is so different, he is like you—or Bess. You won't believe me, it sounds incredible. Can a woman loyally love two men? Can a man loyally love two women? Raymond loves Bess as I love George, and yet—oh, why don't I hate Bess?"

"My poor lamb, you've been caught in a whirlpool. You must let me pull you out."

"Don't beg me to give Raymond up!"
"But this cannot go on."

"No, no, I know. Bess' heart would break. She could not bear to lose him; she adores Raymond."

"Yet you would steal him from her?"

"Ann, you mustn't judge me or I shall kill myself."

"Don't talk like that, Clarisse."

"Don't I know I'm a thief? It will get worse and worse. Some day I shan't fight any more. Ann, I find myself waiting for the day when we shall plunge into real dishonor. I find myself hoping for it, to have it over, to share guilt with him, and scandal; then perhaps our whole lives will have to be welded together. Suppose Bess suffers, suppose she dies. I want him, Ann! Bess is nothing, friendship is nothing beside him."

"And George?"

"Oh, less than nothing. You think I am unnatural because Bess claims more from me than George? George is away. He stays away so much. How can you stay away from some one you love? I couldn't. I couldn't. He doesn't even miss my letters. If I left him it would hurt his pride, not his heart. But with Bess it is different; her love is all to her. I am not ruthless. You cannot

guess how unhappy I was when he first told me she began to suspect."

"Suspect?" demanded Ann startled.

"Not me, perhaps, but that he does not care in the same way. The other night she asked him if he loved her. 'You do love me, don't you, Raymond?' was what she said. He told me. And when a woman *asks*— Oh, Ann, tell me, what am I to do!"

Ann soothed her as best she could, and at last, by the aid of a dose of bromide, got her to sleep. Then she finished her letter to George and wrote to Frances Hibben telling her where to leave the key of the bungalow, saying she would probably use it the following week.

The next morning Ann persuaded Clarisse to remain in bed. When the Erskines drove in she told them Clarisse was not well. Bess said she would be back to see if she could help, but Clarisse refused to see her.

"Ann," she said, "you are right. I must go away from here, and, oh, you must help me all you can, for it's going to break my heart!"

All day Ann kept Clarisse in bed, reading to her or talking to divert her. At night she seemed more quiet and normal, but just before Ann put out her light, after settling her to sleep, she threw her arms about the older woman.

"When are we going away?" she sobbed. "I can't stand this!"

"We can have the bungalow Monday."

"Nearly four more days? Oh, if we must go, let me go before I have a chance to think!"

"Sunday at the earliest, I'm afraid. That leaves only to-morrow and Saturday."

"Only? Ann, you can't understand! I want to jump out of the window, I want to run over there to him now. It is torture to keep us apart with only a few feet between us."

"Then you and I will pack up to-morrow and go somewhere in the meantime. How about staying in New York a few days?"

Clarisse entered into the idea enthusiastically. She would not attempt to go to sleep until Ann had brought a newspaper and they had chosen the plays they were to see and the hotel they were to stop at. But the next morning all Clarisse's interest in the plan was gone. She was apathetic and depressed, and when Ann attempted to rouse her she again gave way to hysteria.

"New York is worse than here! He goes there every day and alone." And then, with a complete return to her first obstinacy, "I can't leave here; it would kill me! I want to be where he is always."

Ann saw her condition was growing serious. She wished to call in a physician, but Clarisse objected.

"What for? To tell him I'm in love with Raymond Erskine?" she demanded.

Friday passed dismally. In the afternoon Bess was allowed to come in for a moment, and in the evening when Clarisse heard Raymond's car, she begged so to be permitted to see him that Ann relented and sent for him.

"You must not stay in the room when he comes," whispered Clarisse. "Just give us five minutes alone. I must—I must kiss him good-by."

Ann would have refused absolutely, but she had had a telegram from George saying he would be home the next afternoon, and in her relief that the weight of her responsibility was soon to be shared she yielded.

Raymond, pale and romantic, came and went. Clarisse lay star-eyed on her couch as tranquil as the drugged.

"Are you satisfied?" Ann asked her with some misgivings.

"Yes, darling. I have at last made up my mind."

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"Good," said Ann. "Then I can really help you."

Clarisse was so tractable Saturday morning that Ann allowed her to get up and go about freely. Bess called, and she and Clarisse had quite a visit together. After lunch Ann, who was counting the hours till George's return, made Clarisse lie down. A little after three she went to call her to warn her of George's home-coming. She found the room empty and in disorder.

"Good Lord!" gasped Ann in horror. "What a fool I've been!" She pulled herself together and hastened next door, where she found Bess and begged the use of her car.

"Clarisse seems to have escaped from me," she exclaimed as lightly as she could. "She's been threatening to—to run away to her husband, and I've sent for him without telling her. So they'll cross each other." She realized her words were incoherent, but Bess promptly gathered the essential, that Ann needed the car.

"George is coming back to-night?" asked Bess, surprised as they started out. "What a pity; Raymond will miss him. He is forced to remain in town overnight."

"What train leaves about this time?" asked Ann, her face pale.

"The three-forty. We can make it. Where is George supposed to be?"

"Buffalo, I think."

"What made her want to run away to him?"

"She's been overwrought lately."

"Miss Muir, don't be angry with me," began Bess haltingly, "but perhaps it's all due to your being too careful of her. It was oppressive."

"I suppose," said Ann evasively, "we can kill with kindness, too. Listen, is that our train? Dare you speed?"

"That's the train from New York, but ours is due right after." Bess pressed the accelerator and in a few moments they drew up at the station.

Clarisse was not on the platform.

Ann made swiftly for the station waiting room. Here she beheld a little crowd of persons gathered near a bench at one end. She knew at once what she verified a moment later. Clarisse was laid upon that bench.

She parted the group, saying, "I am a trained nurse," and came in view of what she had not thought to expect. This was George Vallory, his thin, distinguished face pale with anxiety as he bent over his wife.

"Is that the doctor?" He looked up expectantly. Then his face brightened with relief. "Oh, it's you, Ann! Thank God!"

The three years which had stood between Ann and Clarisse, estranging them in their first glance, had the opposite effect between Ann and George. Ann had not known him very well in the old days, she had been busy nursing during her cousin's courtship and her year of married life before the war. But as George looked up at her now, his glad trustful welcome awoke in her a response which was almost intimate. This feeling for him grew while they ministered to Clarisse together, and at last got her home and sent for a doctor.

George explained to Ann the incidents of his arrival. Seeing Clarisse on the platform, he had naturally thought she had come to meet him and had waved and called to her. For a moment she had seemed on the verge of terrified flight, then conquering this inclination, she had approached him with outstretched hands and had fainted at his feet. It was then he saw she had a suit case with her.

"Was she going anywhere?" he asked.

Ann explained that in Clarisse's nervous state her actions were well-nigh unaccountable.

The doctor held with Ann that complete change, rest, and outdoor living

were necessary, and he approved of Ann and George taking her to Sandy Beach. Clarisse, lying still and corpse-like on her bed, made no comment and no protest. When George came into the room she followed him about with her shadowy eyes in which there was an expression only Ann could understand, for Ann had found on her dressing table a note Clarisse had left there before her attempted flight.

DEAR ANN: I am going to-night with Raymond. If I come back, we'll go to the beach or any other place. It doesn't matter. I shall have memory. Do I seem vile to you? I cannot help it. I love him. C.

On Monday they moved to Sandy Beach. Clarisse continued to act like one but half awake, silent for the most part and unresisting. Raymond had come back late Saturday night, and he and Bess called on Clarisse Sunday afternoon for a good-by visit which Ann somewhat dubiously permitted. But even then Clarisse displayed no feeling.

"Will it take long before she is herself again?" George asked Ann Monday evening as they paced the sand in front of the bungalow.

"That depends on how bad her breakdown is. If she does not improve in a week or so, I'm afraid we'll have to send her somewhere among utter strangers for a while."

"This is fearful. Tell me frankly, Ann, could I have brought this on by seeming to neglect her? It was for her I was working all the time. There are so many things I want to give her, and she's like a little kid, Ann, there's something about her—or something lacking—that cannot understand being refused."

"I know; it both provokes and intrigues."

"Yes, that's it. You feel it, too. She could wheedle fate itself." They continued a few steps in silence, for Ann could not agree and so said nothing.

Then they stood looking at the sea. Ann became aware of a sharp pain in her heart as she wondered whether in future she could consider the ocean as a friend or a foe. George spoke, and his words, echoing her inmost thoughts, made her feel transparent.

"I shall love or hate the sea according to how it treats Clarisse," he said.

Looking back at this walk under the darkening sky with the low-tide waves catching strange light reflections from nowhere on its creeping foam, Ann afterward counted it as a beginning. The understanding they held in common, their sensitivity to their surroundings, everything that makes for sympathy between people was thrown into high relief then.

Ann went to bed happy in the thought that she had found an ally.

He came down every night about six, and Ann watched the clock for his arrival. They kept up their custom of walking on the beach after Clarisse had been settled for the night, and Ann looked forward to these intervals, the rhythmic, relaxed gait, the sound of George's voice against the surge of waters, the scent of his cigar mingled with the smell of the twilight sea. She had to reassure him constantly of Clarisse's improvement, for he was depressed by his wife's continued silence and brooding dislike of her environment. Ann's heart went out to him in pity, the more for what she knew and kept concealed.

All at once Clarisse began to convalesce. One day she laughed when Ann's venturesome ankles were caught by an advancing wave. Soon after this she commented teasingly on Ann's anxious lookout for George's homecoming.

"You act as though he were your husband," she said.

Ann's first reaction to this remark was joy at the evident return of the old Clarisse. Back of this joy was an uneasiness she could not instantly analyze.

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"Are you jealous?" she asked smiling. "He's only your friend, you know. Why should you care?"

Clarisse did not smile back however and later, when Ann was helping her to bed, she pulled her friend close to her in the dark.

"I've been a fool," she whispered. "Oh, Ann, I've waked up now. What are we made of that we can act as I have done? It revolts me to think of it, as if I had been drunk. How could I have played with George's love like that! How splendid he has been!"

Something kept Ann from informing George of this incident. She told herself it was because she did not want to arouse false hopes in him and that if it were more than a passing symptom of recovery, he would soon know of it himself. The next night he told her in a voice awed with hope that Clarisse had kissed him tenderly. To her horror and amazement she found herself receiving the news with sinking spirits.

The truth was borne in upon her as she watched their reconciliation becoming daily more complete. At first she could not believe it, then she was overwhelmed as one who discovers within him the marks of an unsuspected disease. She had always regarded real love as rare and the shallow infatuations, such as Clarisse's for Raymond, voluntarily self-induced in idle men and women in search of excitement. She had thought herself as incapable of one as of the other. She had been too busy and happy to wish for that sort of romance for herself. Now she beheld all her theories wrecked, and life swung dizzily about her. At the age of thirty-three she was in love for the first time, and with Clarisse's husband.

Once she was aware of her state she had no peace. Her evening walks with George now became a thrilling adventure. She was shocked by the impulses which assailed her; she constantly

wanted to touch his sleeve and often stumbled artificially to be steadied by the grip of his hand. Even the glances she stole at him now seemed to her bold and significant. She treasured the clearly remembered line of his profile. Her mind dwelt particularly on the turn of his lips under the close-cropped mustache and the downward curve of his eyes watching her as he listened to what she had to say.

The weeks passed, and at last Clarisse's doctor found her well enough to be accounted completely recovered. Clarisse began to accompany Ann and her husband on their evening promenade. Ann was amazed by the rebellious surliness which welled up in her at this intrusion, this evidence of Clarisse's return to health. Alarmed as she was at her own treachery, she was even more perturbed at her reaction when George, in her presence, broached to Clarisse his idea of taking her with him on a trip partly business, partly pleasure out to the Pacific Coast. Walking beside them in the dark, Ann felt herself grow sick and weak. She wanted to cry out they must not think of it. She had to press her hands to her sides to restrain herself from clutching frantically at George as though to hold him back. And all the while they discussed it oblivious of her presence, Clarisse's voice, full of its old charm and vigor, was eager as a child's at the prospect of going away. Only once they noticed Ann.

"You are so quiet, Nanny," Clarisse exclaimed. "Will you miss your bad patient so much?"

"No," answered Ann in a choked voice. "I shall have my work."

She did not sleep that night, and rose at dawn, dressed, wrapped herself in a warm coat, and went down to the edge of the sea. Its turbulence calmed her. She watched the stone-gray east break into bars through which the first rose-hint of the sun filtered. The ruddiness

increased. Light became evident as well as color in the glow, and then suddenly a voice behind her exclaimed jocularly:

"Ann! You here? I nearly gave you a rather unconventional entertainment. I was bound for a bath."

Her heart leaped. She steadied her trembling lips as she looked up at George where he stood, tall and lank in a closely-drawn bathrobe.

"I'm a trained nurse," she smiled. "The human body doesn't frighten me."

"Quite true." He dropped on the sand beside her. "Did you come out for a last sea sunrise? There won't be many more for us this year!"

"Not if we go to Fairlea Monday," she said.

"It's about time, isn't it? We've had six weeks of it here."

"It's been glorious!" breathed Ann.

"I'm glad you say that. Clarrie and I wondered if it hadn't been a little too much for you." He searched her face for evidence of this in the growing light until she felt she could not bear his impersonal scrutiny.

"I mustn't keep you from your bath," she said, rising.

He was on his feet instantly, helping her up. She felt him unusually close to her, his cool, bony hands in hers. Blindly, as though drawn to it, she buried her lips against them. The next moment he had gathered her protestingly into his arms. She raised her yearning face, and he kissed her, once tenderly, and then, taking fire from her, with passion.

At last she looked up and saw in his eyes amazement, pity, and something else, which was not love. Burning with shame and pride and hot desire she tore herself from his arms and ran to the bungalow.

From that moment their relationship was poisoned. She felt him watch her with curiosity, and a new liking which was almost possessive. In Clarisse's

presence this was intolerable. Away from Clarisse or in retrospect it filled Ann with guilty ecstasy. Her love seemed to lack the ordinary standards of decency. She had no restraint, no loyalty to friendship. She ached for George's presence. The thought that in a few days he and Clarisse would return to Fairlea and then go miles away was bitterer to her than death. She was divided in two; the brain of Ann which despised all this, and the crushed heart of Ann which could not withstand the tide of her passion. Her brain dreaded the lengths to which her heart might send her.

The night before they left Fairlea they were sitting with the Erskines in the mild September starlight on the porch, when Clarisse suggested they go inside for refreshments. Ann and George were the last in. She halted on the doorstep, realizing he was close behind her, so that he stumbled against her. In an instant she had thrown back her head and he lowered his, and she grew limp under the pressure of his lips. The swiftness of his response, the daring secrecy of it went through her like madness. The next instant she heard Clarisse's voice and she backed away into the shadow of the vine.

"Georgie!" called Clarisse. "Come and help us open these bottles. Are you all alone out there, dear?"

"Yes," answered George promptly.

Clarisse appeared and sidled into his arms.

"Darling," she whispered, "you are the dearest man in all the world. Why isn't Bess in love with you? Why isn't every woman?"

"Clarrie, you silly kid!" laughed George uncomfortably.

There was a short silence while they embraced, then Clarisse's whisper, breathless, but plainly audible:

"Oh, Georgie, you do love me—don't you?"

The words aroused in Ann the blind

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panic with which one is awakened from sleep by a near, desperate cry for help. "And when a woman asks!" Clarisse had once said of Bess.

George and Clarisse, their arms entwined, joined the others indoors. Ann crept miserably down the veranda steps, over the lawn through the first crisp fall of early leaves.

She raised her head in agony to the

glorious blue vault above her. Instinctively she clasped her hands close to her aching throat and addressed her soul to celestial guidance.

"Oh, God!" she began.

Then in a flash she saw it all as the stars looked down at her levelly, aloof, untouched.

Once before she had prayed.

And God had answered her prayer.



THERE STANDS COLUMBINE'S HOUSE

THREE'S a street of silent houses
Where no foot goes,
Nor voice speaks,
Nor wind blows.

There are gay geraniums sunning,
And pansies bright,
And old doors,
Painted white.

The sills are worn and hollow,
Moss grown:
Green carpet
On gray stone.

There is not cast a shadow
By anything,
Save the toadstool
In fairy's ring.

There is not brewed a perfume
By any rose.
The street's name
None knows.

It matters not a shilling
How it runs
Between cold moons
And hot suns.

It matters not a penny
Where it lies
Between brown earth
And blue skies.

DOROTHY STOCKBRIDGE.

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Talks With Ainslee's Readers

AT approximately this time comment is rife and speculation much indulged in with regard to the promise of additional revenue which the holiday season inevitably holds forth. It may be little Patricia meditating on the size and capacity of her silken socks and their fittedness to their purpose on Christmas Eve, or it may be the tenement child for once conscious of the inroads of time and wear on his stockings and their consequent inadequacy to the great occasion in the offing. Or it may be that most sensible human, diminutive or full grown, who knows that the intrinsic thing about Christmas is, after all, the love it puts into the hearts of men. But almost everywhere, about now, there is much thought about the approaching holiday season.

WE are thinking about it in this office. We have been, moreover, since about the middle of the summer, and even before then. And our thought of Christmas has taken the inevitable trend for us of Christmas in its relation to you, AINSLEE's readers. We've been deciding over a period of several months just what you would like most to have in your holiday number. And we think we have it. We've been at pains, at all events, to purchase all the things we thought would please you. And it is, we think, a rather attractive assemblage of offerings. We'd like to talk to you a little about the things we have for you, if you will forgive the breach of Christmas etiquette.

FIRST of all, there is the novelette. It is by Warren E. Schutt, who in a short time has endeared himself to AINSLEE's readers. Mr. Schutt, as one reader put it to us, writes precisely the type of story which has established the

magazine as unique. This time the story is about a young and infinitely charming American abroad, who after the mysterious breaking of his engagement by himself devoted himself to the beautiful and exotic dethroned queen of Baractria, where during the turbulent days of the war hearts and kingships were alike ruthlessly broken. No one knew quite what the situation was. The appearance of his ex-fiancée at the races one day, where he was forced to meet and talk with her, however, precipitated a long line of stirring events, which Mr. Schutt tells you about most engagingly in this latest of his stories, "Leveled Purposes."

ANOTHER of Beatrice Ravenel's charming and unusual stories is in the holiday number, this time called "A Granada Christmas." Whatever proof one may offer to the contrary, the Latin technique in love-making differs in all essentials from that of the tongue-tied Anglo-Saxon race. An American girl, sojourning with a chaperon in Spain, learned this very graphically, and in her Christmas offering Mrs. Ravenel weaves the story of her unusual romance bewitchingly.

IN the holiday number also Winston Bouvé has a gripping and extremely appealing mystery story called "A Lady in Ermine." It is one of the best of her stories. What would you, if you were a young and much-sought-after bachelor, do if, on returning to your apartment one cold, snowy night, you encountered a lovely young creature, enveloped gorgeously in an ermine wrap, quite frankly fitting a key into your door? What would you do if she entered? What, furthermore, would you do if— But read the story, and then

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tell us. You will, we predict, be absorbed from start to finish of this unique Christmas tale.

FEW writers of our knowledge more deftly chart the course of humans the world over than Berthe K. Mellett. With a sense of selective detail that is oftentimes amazing, Mrs. Mellett cleverly weaves a tale that Scheherazade might envy in the telling. And always there is a depth to the theme and plot which leaves one a little bit inarticulate with admiration. To all of you who so fully praised Mrs. Mellett's story in a recent issue, called "The Raider," we offer this her latest story with the full assurance that you will find it worthy to be spoken of along with its predecessor. Read in the holiday number Berthe K. Mellett's story, "The Gift."

ONE of the strongest stories we have ever read is Frances O. J. Gaither's latest tale, called "Cousin of the Moon." You will find it also in the January number. Too large and poignant a theme to toss about lightly and conversationally, we hesitate to forecast too much of it to you now. It is the tale of two women and a child. And two men. We are not sure, though, that the men are vitally concerned in the story. Read it, we would urge, and think. For some time to come it will be to you more than just a short story that you read somewhere.

THE foregoing constitute but a small and, we hope, tempting sample of the holiday number of AINSLEE'S. There are other ingredients that are well worth the savoring.



Statement of the Ownership, Management, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of AINSLEE'S MAGAZINE, published monthly, at New York, N. Y., for October 1, 1923.

State of New York, County of New York, (ss.)

Before me, a Notary Public, in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Ormond G. Smith, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is President of Street & Smith Corporation, publishers of AINSLEE'S MAGAZINE, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publishers, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: *Publishers*, Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; *editor*, Helen L. Lieder, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; *managing editors*, Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; *business managers*, Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

2. That the owners are: Ainslee's Magazine Company, Seventh Avenue and Fifteenth Street, New York, N. Y., a corporation composed of Ormond G. Smith, 89 Seventh Avenue, New York

N. Y.; George C. Smith, 89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; Cora A. Gould, 89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: Clarence C. Vernon, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

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ORMOND G. SMITH, President,
of Street & Smith Corporation, publishers.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 28th day of September, 1923. Frank M. Davis, Jr., Notary Public, No. 202, New York County. (My commission expires March 30, 1924.)



The men who are hardest on shoes will tell you why—*Nothing takes the place of Leather!*

The Old Shoemaker says:

"A-course, I may be prejudiced. I suppose I am. Ever since I was knee-high I've been working with leather in one way or another and I know there's nothing in the world like it.

"It doesn't seem so long ago that most of my business was making shoes—every stitch, thread and heel-peg was my own.

"I know that I'm out o' the runnin' so far as shoemaking is concerned. I come in on the repairs. Put new soles and heels on them. Leather soles and heels that'll outwear any substitute you can name.

"Yes, I've tried all sorts of things for soles and heels and I've come to the conclusion that when you try to imitate nature or go her one better you're setting in over your head and hands.

"Well, come in again. Will those soles and heels wear? Why, friend, they're leather—real honest leather. There's real comfort in those shoes now and they won't come back to me again for months."

MAN has never learned to compete with nature in the manufacture of leather. To-day's leather is far superior to that of even a few years ago—methods of tanning have improved, the fashioning of shoes and other articles of leather has progressed. *But leather—nature's product—always has been and is to-day supreme. There is nothing like it.*

This is what the host of those who are on their feet most will tell you. The veteran policeman, the mail man, the farmer, the soldier, the street-car conductor, the saleswoman, the structural steel worker who depends upon his footwear for a perfect grip on narrow footings far in the air—ask any of them.

They will tell you that for real economy *nothing takes the place of leather*. That for cool comfort and ease—there is nothing like leather.

A veteran police officer, Jacob L. Buchanan, of the Philadelphia city police force, says about shoes of leather:

"New shoes last me five or six months, and then I have them resoled and they are good for the rest of the year. Generally I have them rebuilt once more, and that means another five months' hard wear. When you tramp a beat for hours like I do, you want your feet to feel comfortable, and you don't want to feel the pavement through them. So, I make sure that they have solid leather soles and heels. Nothing else is near so easy on the feet. I have tried other things once or twice; but I stick to leather now."

It is only natural that these men should find, through their practical experience, that "nothing takes the place of leather" for them. Leather is composed of thousands of tiny elastic fibres, tunneled with pores. Muscles can move under leather. Feet can breathe—yet, they are kept warm. That is why leather-shod feet are comfortable—comfortable after hours of walking. And that is why leather wears and wears as nothing else can. Leather is nature's product, nothing can take the place of it.

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WHAT'S the use of living when you're only half alive? You get up in the morning and you don't have the pep of a jelly fish. Your work is a burden and life has ceased to give you a thrill. You don't seem to get anywhere and nobody cares whether you do or not. What's the use fellows? Call the Undertaker, for you're dead and you don't know it.

A New Life

Stop! It's all wrong. There is another life right here before you. A new and a better one. A life that is full of *thrills* and *sunshine*. Every day opens *new worlds to conquer, new joys, new friends and lasting ones*. Come with me and let me guide you to it.

I have a system that knocks those gloom bugs higher than a kite. I'll put pep in your old backbone that will make you feel like a jack rabbit. I'll put a spring to your step and a flash to your eye so that your own friends won't know you.

Health and Strength

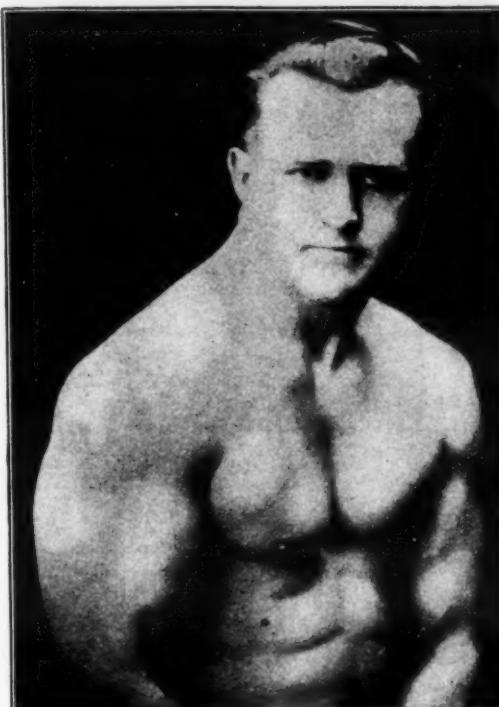
That's what you need and that's what you get. Come on now, pull in your belt and throw out your chest. Take a good deep breath of that pure air that's all about you. Give your heart a treat with some rich blood. You will feel so good you will think it's your birthday. Drop me a line and I'll show you how to do it. I'm going to put a chest on you that will make your old ribs strain with the pressure. I'm going to change those skinny arms and legs of yours to a real man's size. You will have the strength and vitality to do things you never thought possible. Come on fellows! Get busy. I don't promise these things—I guarantee them. Are you with me?

Send for My New 84-Page Book

"MUSCULAR DEVELOPMENT"

It contains forty-three full-page photographs of myself and some of the many prize-winning pupils I have trained. Some of these came to me as pitiful weaklings, imploring me to help them. Look them over now and you will marvel at their present physiques. This book will prove an impetus and a real inspiration to you. It will thrill you through and through. All I ask is 10 cents to cover the cost of wrapping and mailing, and it is yours to keep. This will not obligate you at all, but for the sake of your future health and happiness, do not put it off. Send to-day—right now, before you turn this page.

EARLE E. LIEDELMAN
Dept. 5012, 305 Broadway, New York City



Earle E. Liederman as he is to-day

EARLE E. LIEDELMAN

Dept. 5012, 305 Broadway, New York City

Dear Sir:—I enclose herewith 10 cents, for which you are to send me, without any obligation on my part whatever, a copy of your latest book, "Muscular Development." (Please write or print plainly.)

Name.....

Street.....

City..... State.....

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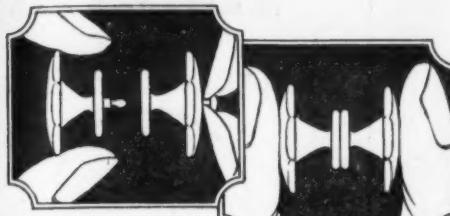
A Christmas Hint from Santa Claus

Give

Eveready Flashlights



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*Closes like this and
Stays locked*



*An
Up-to-date Gift*

HE'S hoping for a pair of those popular new Sta-Lokt Links. The kind that press together, lock and *stay locked* until you lift the knob. Then they open easily—instantly. Sta-Lokt is the *perfected separable* cuff link. There are many two-piece links, but only one Sta-Lokt. Be sure and ask for it by name. From \$1.50 to \$7.00 a pair. Your jeweler will be glad to show them to you. Write for folders of Sta-Lokt designs, including the new Cuff-Line shape.

Pair illustrated
has solid gold
tops. In box as
shown, \$7.



STA-LOKT Cuff
Link

J. F. STURDY'S SON'S COMPANY
MANUFACTURING JEWELERS

ATTLEBORO FALLS, MASS.

Makers of Sturdy Chains and Bracelets for fifty-eight years



Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements



Break down that wall between you and your boy!

That baby whose first smile was directly into your eyes, that toddler who took his first steps with his little hand gripped round your fingers, is he growing away from you?

Now he is weighing, judging, making his own conclusions. Each careless re-buff cautions him to build a wall of reserve against ridicule. Each misunderstanding builds the wall higher and thicker.

Between the ages of 10 and 20, what boys most need is association with fellows and men of strong character, who understand them and whom they understand.

This is the companionship that a half-million boys are finding and being developed by in **THE AMERICAN BOY**.

Each story is written to let boys face a real boy-problem and teaches them how a regular fellow will meet and solve it. Its articles are instructive, boy-building, man-building, and suggest all that is best and healthiest to a boy.

Right now you are facing the Christmas season. What an opportunity to break down the wall that separates you and your boy. Give him a year's subscription to **THE AMERICAN BOY**.

\$2.00 a year by mail. 20 cents a copy at news-stands. Subscribe for a year or leave a standing order at your news-dealer's.

American Boy

The Biggest, Brightest News Magazine for Boys in All the World.



THE SPRAGUE PUBLISHING CO.

No. 832 American Bldg., Detroit, Mich.

Enclosed find \$2.00, for which send **THE AMERICAN BOY** for one year, beginning with the Christmas, 1923, number, to

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Say "Bayer" and Insist!



Unless you see the name "Bayer" on package or on tablets you are not getting the genuine Bayer product prescribed by physicians over twenty-two years and proved safe by millions for

Colds

Toothache

Earache

Neuralgia

Headache

Lumbago

Rheumatism

Pain, Pain

Accept "Bayer Tablets of Aspirin" only. Each unbroken package contains proper directions. Handy boxes of twelve tablets cost few cents. Druggists also sell bottles of 24 and 100. Aspirin is the trade mark of Bayer Manufacture of Monoaceticacidester of Salicylicacid.

6⁹⁰

Save $\frac{1}{2}$



20 YR. INKT GOLD-
FILLED CASE
10 JEWEL LEVER MOVEMENT

We give unusual values as we are large manufacturers selling direct to you. This watch fitted with well-known Compton 10-jewel lever movement. Gold-filled case. Gold-filled chain and then model, engraved back and edges. Regulated to keep accurate time. Written guarantee of satisfaction or money back with every watch. Bent no money. Pay postage on arrival. FREE: Insured knife and Waldemar cloth for LIMITED TIME ONLY.

SUPREME JEWELRY MFG. CO.
Dept. 12017
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KNIFE AND
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Cuticura Soap IS IDEAL For the Hands

Soap, Ointment, Talcum, etc. everywhere. For samples address: Cuticura Laboratories, Dept. D, Malden, Mass.

Diamonds for Christmas \$100 Brings Your Choice



10 MONTHS TO PAY

Just Think! ANY of these appropriate Xmas gifts will be sent you IMMEDIATELY upon receipt of only \$1. Our friendly credit terms enable you to buy worthwhile gifts at less than cash prices. \$1 at Sweet's does the work of \$5 elsewhere.

SEND ONLY \$1.00

and your choice will be immediately sent you for your examination. After you have convinced yourself that it is an exceptional value, keep it and pay only 1/5th of the price. **10 MONTHS NEXT YEAR TO PAY THE BALANCE!**

NO DELAY—NO RED TAPE.

Special Xmas Service insures prompt delivery. Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded. Transactions strictly confidential.

EVERY DIAMOND GUARANTEED

All SWEET diamonds are perfect cut, blue white, superior quality gems. You are protected by the Guarantee Value Bond given with every diamond. **7 1/2% YEARLY INCREASE** for exchange purposes guaranteed.

FREE: A postal brings the Sweet Diamond Book with over 3,000 appropriate Xmas gifts. Everything on our generous credit terms. Send for it **TODAY** to Dept. 183-T

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"THE HOUSE OF QUALITY"

CAPITAL \$1,000,000.

L·W·SWEET INC.
DEPT 183-T 1650-1660 BROADWAY, NEW YORK

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IT is not expensive to be well dressed. It is expensive not to give time and thought to the question. Men buy Shawknit Hosiery by name. Its added value does not carry an added price.



SHAW STOCKING CO.
Lowell, Mass.

**WHITING-ADAMS
BRUSHES**
Vulcan Rubber Cemented
Shaving Brushes

True friends of shavers and razors.
Easy shaves and smooth skins.
Bristles, hair and handles never
part company. Held with pure rub-
ber vulcanized as hard as granite.
Sterilized completely, sealed singly
in packages. Infection cannot come
from them.

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JOHN L. WHITING-J. J. ADAMS CO.
Boston, U.S.A.
Brush Manufacturers for Over 134 Years
and the Largest in the World.

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WANTED! RAILWAY MAIL CLERKS
Men and Women 17 to 45 years, \$1600 to \$2600
Common Education Sufficient. Travel—See the
Country. No Lay-offs—Life-time Job. Holidays
with Pay.
Write today for free list of positions obtainable
and information how to get a position.
UNITED BUSINESS TRAINING ASSOCIATION, 211 Diana Bldg., Detroit, Mich.

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FREE
BOOK
BEAUTIFUL
FURNISHINGS**

The very things you need now.
Latest styles. Factory-to-Family
low prices. Save big money.
Furnish a room or whole home.
As little as \$3 down; a year or
more to pay. Also Pianos,
Players, Phonographs. Get
out this adv. Write TODAY;
for new Fall "Larkin Book of
Better Homes".

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DIAMONDS and other Xmas Gifts

Send No Money On Credit
10 Days' Free Trial

\$5 down—\$2 a month for any of these three rings



X34—Perfect cut blue white diamond. 14k. gold. set in a square and pierced ring.... \$25.00



X35—A diamond ring set with a large white gold onyx and a square and pierced diamond.... \$28.00



X36—Solid 14k. white gold ring set with a perfect cut blue white diamond.... \$22.50

\$10 down—\$1 a week for any of these six rings



X37—14k. white gold perfect cut blue white quality diamond.... \$50.00



X38—14k. white gold ring set with a perfect cut blue white diamond. One square sapphire.... \$42.50



X39—Seven blue white diamonds set in PLATINUM. Green gold 14k. ring.... \$52.50



X40—14k. green gold ring 14k. white gold top. Perfect cut blue white diamond.... \$57.50



X41—Two blue white perfect cut diamonds. 14k. white gold ring.... \$50.00



X42—14k. diamond white gold ring. Perfect cut blue white diamond. Rare beauty.... \$48.50

\$15 down—\$1.50 a week for any of these three rings



X43—14k. white diamonds. PLATINUM set 14k. white gold ring.... \$77.50



X44—14k. white gold, yellow gold. Perfect cut blue white diamond.... \$78.00



X45—14k. white gold ring. Perfect cut blue white diamond.... \$73.50



X46—Solid 14k. white gold case. Sapphire crown, pane dial. Adjusted to 24 hour movement. Guaranteed time-piece. Veryainty.... \$25.00 down—\$2 a month.

Send No Money

Buy on credit as others do. Simply send your name and address and we will send ring or watch you select. Only a satisfied maker finds a customer. After payment is made you are not satisfied, return to us and receive your money back immediately. You take no risk. Transactions confidential. Guarantee Bond with each purchase.

Write for Xmas Catalog. Latest designs in quality jewelry, diamonds, watches, jewelry, every toilet sets, etc. Prices \$10 to \$1000. Large stock of credit money available. Our prompt and reliable service. Do not send what you want here, do not order your Xmas Gifts until you send for our catalog. Write Dept. E-41.

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BAER BROS. Co.
6 MAIDEN LANE - NEW YORK



"Just the thing for" - - -

A Gift that Everyone Wants the "Take-a-Picture-Package"

"Just what I wanted"—what a joyful satisfaction it is to hear that glad cry on Christmas morning. And you'll hear it surely if you choose the new Ansco Take-a-Picture-Package for your present.

A neat, durable red case, a sturdy smooth working handsome Ansco Camera, [pictures 2 1/4 x 3 1/4 in.], four rolls of the wonderful Ansco Speedex Film, and the handy little Ansco album to keep the snaps in,—that's the Take-a-Picture-Package, complete for five dollars! By far the greatest camera outfit value we've ever heard of.

Be sure to see the Take-a-Picture-Package before making up your Christmas list. It will solve the old "what-shall-I-give" question for practically everybody. If your dealer hasn't it send us his name and address.

CAMERAS
ANSCO
FILM

ANSCO COMPANY, BINGHAMTON, N.Y.



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She wanted to get off in a corner

SHE knew there must be some reason why people didn't seem to take to her. But what it was, remained an enigma in her mind. True, no one was ever bluntly rude to her. Yet she was not sought after as a girl and her mother thought a beautiful girl should be.

At parties she felt so miserably out of things that often she simply wanted to get off in a corner and just cry it out.

That's the insidious thing about halitosis (unpleasant breath). You, yourself, rarely know when you have it. And even your closest friends won't tell you.

Sometimes, of course, halitosis comes from some deep-seated organic disorder that requires professional advice. But usually—and fortunately—halitosis is only a local condition that yields to the regular use of Listerine as a mouth wash and gargle.

It is an interesting thing that this well-known antiseptic that has been in use for years for surgical dressings, possesses these unusual properties as a breath deodorant. It halts food fermentation in the mouth and leaves the breath sweet, fresh and clean. *Not* by substituting some other odor, but by removing the old, unpleasant one. The odor of Listerine itself quickly disappears.

Your druggist will supply you with Listerine. He sells lots of it. It has dozens of different uses as a safe antiseptic and has been trusted us such for a half a century. Read the interesting little booklet that comes with every bottle.—Lambert Pharmacal Company, Saint Louis, U. S. A.



She Found A Pleasant Way To Reduce Her Fat

She did not have to go to the trouble of diet or exercise. She found a better way, which aids the digestive organs to turn food into muscle, bone and sinew instead of fat.

She used *Marmola Prescription Tablets* which are made from the famous Marmola prescription. They aid the digestive system to obtain the full nutrient of food. They will allow you to eat many kinds of food without the necessity of dieting or exercising.

Thousands have found that the *Marmola Prescription Tablets* give complete relief from obesity. And when the accumulation of fat is checked, reduction to normal healthy weight soon follows.

All good drug stores the world over sell *Marmola Prescription Tablets* at one dollar a box. Ask your druggist for them, or order direct and they will be sent in plain wrapper, postpaid.

MARMOLA COMPANY
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PIMPLES

Your Skin can be Quickly Cleared of Pimples, Blackheads, Acne Eruptions on the face or body, Barber's Itch, Eczema, Enlarged Pores, Oily or Shiny Skin.

FREE Write today for my FREE Booklet, "Clear Tone Skin," telling how I cured myself being afflicted for over fifteen years. \$1,000 Cold Cash says I can clear your skin of the above mentioned.

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TELL TOMORROW'S

White's Weather Prophet fore-casts the weather 8 to 24 hours in advance. Not a toy but a scientifically constructed instrument working automatically. Handsome, reliable and everlasting.

An Ideal Present
Made doubly interesting by the little figures of Hansel and Gretel and the Witch, who are set to move on 8½% & ½% fully guaranteed. Postpaid to any address in U. S. or Canada on receipt of \$1.25.

SPECIAL OFFER—Handsome illustrated story of Hansel and Gretel, in colors, given away free with each order.

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\$2

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ROYAL DIAMOND & WATCH CO. 170 Broadway - New York

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"There is no music you enjoy like the music you make yourself." That's as true of your friends as it is of you. Give them Hohners for Christmas—no other gift at the price will give half the pleasure. The Hohner is a whole orchestra in itself—it makes real music—sweet, tuneful, delightful music. Anybody can learn to play it in an hour. Ask the dealer for the Hohner Free Instruction Book; if he is out of them, write "M. Hohner, New York." Hohner Harmonicas are sold everywhere; 50c. up.

“Own Your Own Hohner”

HOHNER ARMONICAS

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I know because I was Deaf and had Head Noises for over 30 years. My invisible Anteptic East Drums restored my hearing and stopped Headaches, and will do it for you. There are Tiny Microphones. Cannot be seen when worn. Effective when Deafness is caused by Catarrh or by Perforated, Partially, or Wholly Destroyed Natural Drums. Easy to put in, easy to take out. An "Unseen Comfort." Inexpensive. Write for Booklet and my guarantee of what I recovered my hearing.

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Relief for **coughs**

Use PISO'S—this prescription quickly relieves children and adults.

A pleasant syrup. No opiates.

35° and 60° sizes
sold everywhere

HEALTH

is the Greatest Joy of Life. Only the robust, vigorous and healthy can enjoy life to its fullest. The complaining, ailing, sickly ones are unhappy, discontented, dejected, failures.

For many years I have been making people well through Strongfortism. I have helped tens of thousands to become strong. No matter what ails you, write me fully about it, and I will prove to you I can help you.

The experience and research of a lifetime are contained in my wonderful FREE BOOK "*Promotion and Conservation of Health, Strength, and Mental Energy.*"

Send a ten cent piece (one dime) to cover postage.

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Arresting Pain with "Concentrated Sunlight"



RECOMMENDED BY PHYSICIANS

for

Neuralgia
Neuritis
Lumbago
Rheumatism
Sprains
Skin afflictions
Gout
Sciatica
Muscular
and nervous
disorders

our informative
catalogue
shows the easy and
effective use of
Stein-O-Lite.
Send for it!

INSTEAD of hot water, messy poultices, intolerable plasters, etc., modern medical science today uses a new, clean and infinitely more effective method of relieving pain.

It is—*Radiant Heat and Light*, as perfectly produced by the Stein-O-Lite.

Why Stein-O-Lite is more effective

Old-fashioned hot applications, while helpful, have little penetrative power. They heat the surface but do not touch the seat of pain. Stein-O-Lite *radiates* *heat*. They get right down to the throbbing tissues and break up the congestion thru stimulation. You can stand a few moments in the sun, then lie and the pain die out as the warm, molten rays—golden as tropical sunlight—play upon the tender area. Clean as sunlight, warm as sunlight, pleasant as sunlight—Stein-O-Lite does the work.

**Now Stein-O-Lite
can become your friend**
Because Stein-O-Lite rays do not burn or irritate the skin (see why in panel text) any individual can use it. For the pains of little ones as well as grown-ups. This is a convenience. Just screw a plug into a light socket, turn the switch and a flood of pain-soothing light starts to work.

We invite you to try a Stein-O-Lite treatment.

Special Offer

We know—and physicians know—the great remedial powers of Stein-O-Lite. But we want you to try it—thoroughly at our risk on

FIVE DAYS FREE TRIAL

Send us \$12 in money order, bank draft or check (also send U. S. D. postage prepaid). If Stein-O-Lite does not prove all that our accompanying literature proclaims, return it and we will cheerfully refund money.



Stein-O-Lite rays are directed evenly and evenly burning point.

MAIL THIS COUPON

Stein-O-Lite Corp., 135 Lloyd Street, Brooklyn, N. Y.

NOTE—if you desire
the Stein-O-Lite
C. O. D. check here

Name _____

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Gentlemen: I enclose \$12 for a Stein-O-Lite with the understanding that should it prove unsatisfactory after 5 days trial I can return it—and my money will be refunded.

DON'T WEAR A TRUSS

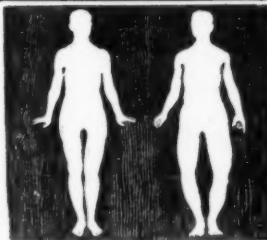
BE COMFORTABLE—

Wear the Brooks Appliance, the modern scientific invention which gives rupture sufferers immediate relief. It has no metal parts, no pins or pastes. Automatic Air Cushions bind and draw together the broken parts. No salves or plasters. Durable, Cheap. Sent on trial, prove it. *Boo! Brooks* wear it or imitation. Look for trademark bearing portrait and signature of C. E. Brooks which appears on every Appliance. None other genuine. Full information and booklet sent free in plain, sealed envelope.

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is now more than ever the key-note of success. *Now-Legged and Knock-Kneed men and women*, both young and old, will be glad to hear that I have now ready for market my new appliance, which will successfully straighten, within a short time, bow-leggedness and knock-kneed legs, safely, quickly and permanently, without pain, operation or exertion. *With the aid of this device your daily work can be worn at night.* My new "Lim-Strainer," Model 18, U. S. Patent, is easy to adjust; its result will save you soon from further humiliation, and improve your personal appearance 20 per cent.

Write for my free copyrighted physiological and anatomical book which tells you how to correct how and knock-kneed legs without any obligation on your part. Enclose a dime for postage.

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**A GREAT SALE
OF
SUPERB NEW WATCHES**

\$6.75 AT CUT PRICES \$11.75

We were fortunate in securing a quantity of smart watches which we offer at *cut prices*. Ladies 14J. Watch, gold filled, 25 years guaranteed, with diamond set crown, case and back, \$11.75. Men's. Hand made dial; sapphire crown; program ribbon; clasp. One men's watch with rectangular movement. AT ONLY \$6.75. Send no money. We prepay postage you pay postman. Money back guarantee. We supply all kinds of time keepers and of fashionable designs. Write TODAY for yours.

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Containing complete
story of the origin
and history of that
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SAXOPHONE

This book tells you when to use the Saxophone—singly, in quartettes, in sextettes, or in regular band; how to play it in solo, in ensemble, and many other things you would like to know. The Saxophone is the easiest of all wind instruments to play. You can learn to play the scale in no time and you can play it in any key. It will double your income, your pleasure and your popularity. Nothing can take the place of the Saxophone for

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Orchestra, Band, or Solo. Concert Band, Brass Band, Trumpet, Trombone or other instrument. Easy terms of payment arranged. Mention instrument interested in and complete catalog will be sent.

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Everything in Band and Orchestra Instruments
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How Did Your Garters Look This Morning?

Hurried on in the morning—tossed off at night, your garters are perhaps not so carefully scrutinized as are other articles of apparel. Keep them fresh and lively—the added comfort will repay you. Try Wideweb "Bostons."

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THE GIFT FOR A MAN!

GIVE him the gift he'd select for himself—a stylish convenient Spur Tie Bow. For Christmas in attractive gift boxes, at all good dealers. Comes all tied for him—by hand. Two sizes—many patterns. An exclusive patented feature prevents curling, rolling or wrinkling. Insist on the genuine. Look for the name Spur on the tie.

ALL TIED FOR YOU

Write for Style Book C

HEWES & POTTER, Boston, Mass.

Makers of BULL-DOG

Suspenders and Garters, guaranteed 365 days' wear. Bull-Dog Belts—Vestoff Suspenders—Spur Tie Four-in-Hands.

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For EYES of starry brightness, use Murine. This harmless lotion clears the whites of the EYES and imparts new life and sparkle. Delightfully refreshing after reading, sewing, business, motoring and all outdoor sports.

Write Murine Company, Dept. 61,
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MURINE
For Your EYES

Widely Used Since 1889



Youth-Ami Skin Peel

A New Scientific Discovery
which painlessly and harmlessly replaces the old skin with a new and removes all Surface Blemishes, Fipples, Blackheads, Discolorations, Sunburns, Eczema, Acne, Birthmarks, etc. A non-oil, invisible liquid. Produces a healthy new skin, beautiful as a baby's. Results astounding. Booklet "The Magic of a New Skin" free in plain sealed envelope.

Youth-Ami Laboratories, Dept. 618, 30 E. 29th St., New York

Relief for coughs

Use PISO'S—this prescription quickly relieves children and adults. A pleasant syrup. No opiates

35¢ and 60¢ sizes
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WHO leave the genuine in the market. Bring a few of our rings. We will give you a ring from the three imported diamonds.

SEND NO MONEY 3.25

Pay postage 2.25 and postage on arrival. Money back guarantee. Limited number. Send a stamp.

FREE GIFT—LINED ART LEATHER

Gift Case for this gorgeous ring.

BRADLEY BOSTON CO.,
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maintains his store at considerable expense. He must pay for help, rent and lighting. He carries many articles that you would never dream of ordering direct from manufacturers, and is, therefore, of great service when you need a newspaper, a cigar, or a box of stationery. Then why not give him all of your custom and so help make his business profitable? Tell him to show you samples of Ainslee's, Popular, Love Story, People's Story, Top-Notch, Detective Story and Picture-Play magazines. Select those you want and he will gladly deliver them to your residence regularly.

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Any of the
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select, you
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agree that
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Let DIAMONDS say Merry Xmas

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642AD—18" indestructible quality Pearls of unusual sheen and lustre with White Gold clasp set with genuine Perfect cut diamond. \$14.50



643AD—Premier Diamond Ring, Blue-white Quality Diamond. \$95.00



644AD—Engraved Premier Diamond Ring, Blue-white Diamond. \$37.50



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646AD—Cluster Ring, 7 Blue-white Diamonds set in Platinum. \$73.50



650AD—Green Gold Gypsy Cluster, 7 Blue-white Diamonds. \$87.50



647AD—Substantial Round Belcher Ring, Brilliant Blue-white Diamond. \$80.00



653AD—18 kt. White Gold Hexagon Ring, 7 Blue-white diamonds set in Platinum. \$39.50



654AD—Gent's Ring, finest quality Blue white Perfect cut Diamond. \$110.00



652AD—Popular 14kt. White Gold regular Wrist Watch, very much in demand, 18-jewel guaranteed imported nickel movement. Special Price \$33.65



646AD—Engraved Belcher Ring, Blue-white Perfect cut Diamond. \$60.00

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MONEY DOWN

Any of the startling diamond values pictured here can be yours without risking a single penny. Each item is ideally suited for Christmas and will make a charming gift. No matter what you select, you pay **only a few cents a day**. Your selection sent on your simple request without a single penny down. If you don't agree that it is the **biggest bargain** you have ever seen, return it at our expense. If you keep it, pay at the rate of **only a few cents a day**.

YEARLY DIVIDENDS

You are guaranteed a per cent yearly increase in value on all diamond exchanges. Also a per cent bonus privilege.

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Send coupon for your copy today to Dept. 1220.
See these wonderful bargains for yourself under the Lyon Charge Account Plan.

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THERE'S no gift like a watch, nothing used so much, consulted so often, carried so long. The Ingersoll you give now will be ticking Christmas Greetings every day throughout the year.

Your dealer can show you Ingersolls to fit every purse and purpose. Sizes for men, women, boys and girls. Radiolite dials that tell time in the dark. Jeweled models in nickel and gold-filled cases.

Prices from \$2.00 to \$10.00

Ingersoll
Reliable Watches at Low Prices

New Improved YANKEE

More men and boys use the Ingersoll Yankee than any other watch. Sturdy, reliable, good-looking. It carries a sound guarantee.

Canadian Maple Leaf, \$2.00



\$2.00

For women, girls and small boys

MIDGET
\$3.50



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WATERBURY

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No picture can do justice to this beautiful dinner set. I want you to have it on your table. I want you to know the Attractions of the Alabaster Colored Shape, the Beauty of its refined Gold Border and Orange background. Come and see how the big, wide, brilliant gold handles enrich and beautify the set. Then I want you to know the Pride of Possessing a high-class dinner set that bears your initial on every piece. Order now. You will receive set in 30 Days' Free Trial. The picture shows, in reduced size, the attractive Initial design. This design is in 7 harmoniously blended colors and

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Send me the 110-piece Initial Dinner Set and Free Table Cloth, 6 Napkins and 2 Doilies. Enclosed is \$1.00 first payment. It is understood that it at the end of the 30 Days' Free Trial, I will pay \$1.00 per month. Monthly Order No. RA2920. Terms: \$1.00 with order, \$2.50 Monthly. Price \$29.95. Little remains to pay. Order now. You will receive set in 30 Days' Free Trial. Please print or write name and address plainly.

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gold. SUPREME QUALITY. Everything that high class materials, manufacturing skill, art and design can do, has been done to make this beautiful Dinnerware set. The gold is of the highest quality and the gold in the wreath, the scroll of roses in natural colors, the gold edge, and the inner line of orange, are absolutely put on to stay. We guarantee against breakage in shipment. Each piece wrapped separately in tissue paper.

**SPECIAL 30TH ANNIVERSARY
Sale Price Only \$29.95**

30 Days' Free Trial—Easy Monthly Payments

This dinner set formerly sold for \$44.75 and without the Free Table Cloth, Napkins and Doilies. You would have been satisfied to pay this price for the High Quality and Exquisite Design of this set. Alone to these points of excellence I have added these additional features: The size of your choice, the choice of 7 harmonious colors, the gold in the wreath, the scroll of roses in natural colors, the gold edge, and the inner line of orange, are absolutely put on to stay. We guarantee against breakage in shipment. Each piece wrapped separately in tissue paper.

I want to send you the 110 pieces of 30 Days' Free Trial to one person, and not to a store. You will receive the dinner set, the table cloth, the napkins and the doilies. The trial will cost you a penny. Be careful to state the name and address of the person to whom you want the dinner set sent. Price, \$2.50 Monthly.

Order No. RA2920. Price, \$29.95. Terms \$1.00 with order, \$2.50 Monthly.

THE 110 PIECES

12 9 1/2-in. Dinner Plates, 12 7 1/4-in. Platter, Lunch Plates, 12 1/2-in. Dessert Plates, 12 1/2-in. Oatmeal Plates, 3 Covered Vegetable Dishes, (2 Pieces), 1 8-in. Open Vegetable Dish, 1 10 1/2-in. Meat Platter, 1 10 1/2-in. Gravy Boat, 1 10 1/2-in. Gravy Dish, 1 10 1/2-in. Covered Sugar Bowl (3 Pieces), 3 Cream Pitches, 1 6-in. Pickle Dish, 1 7-in. Butter Dish.

FREE Table Cloth, Napkin and Doilies If you will send me your order QUICKLY, I will send you absolutely Free a Table Cloth, 6 Napkins and 2 Doilies.

Dollies, all nicely scalloped. These articles are made of High Class Full Bleached Soft Wash Cotton Damask. The design is attractive; the wearing quality is excellent. The table cloth is 60 x 102 inches, with a more or less cording edge of dainty beauty; it is bigger, and of a better quality than is usually found in similar sets; it measures 60 x 102 inches, and is very strong. The round doilies measure 17 1/2 x 17 1/2 inches. The 6 round napkins match the table cloth and are also larger than usual; they measure 17 1/2 x 17 1/2 inches.

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